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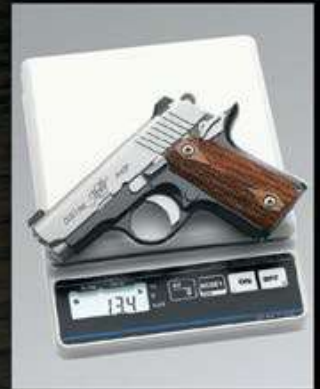
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FIRST WEEK OF SEPTEMBER

There are a lot of handgunners out there that still like the classic blued steel, double-action revolver. S&W is one firearms manufacturer who built its reputation on that platform, and it has revisited the category by offering an array of DA revolvers that range from .22 rimfire to .44 Magnum. While some hardcore wheel gun believers think the shooting sports category is overloaded with polymer pistols, S&W has introduced a line of revolvers that will remind every handgunner about why these revolvers were deemed classics in their day.

“Zig-zag” may sound like a confusing term to use when describing a tactical training session, but it employs tips and techniques that could be a real-life life-saver. We also take a look at the most popular .22 semiauto rifle ever made, Ruger’s 10/22, and show how simple it is to drop in a trigger that is being offered by...who else, Ruger.

SECOND WEEK OF SEPTEMBER

Many believe you haven’t experienced the world of firearms until you’ve fired the M1A...and once you have had that experience, you’re going to want to come back for more. Now Springfield Armory, which builds M1As, has something else to entice you—the M1A Loaded Precision Rifle with adjustable stock. That’s a mouthful but it is truly a rifle that is “loaded” with options. Craig Boddington and James Tarr give the rifle a workout and are duly impressed. The M1A is viewed as the standard in some circles when it comes to marksmanship, and this new version only adds to the credibility the rifle has among rifle marksmen.

Mention the word “Uzi” and most firearms enthusiasts will immediately recognize the Class III auto designed by Uzi Gal. Patrick Sweeney and Tom Beckstrand get their hands on several versions, and the brass starts flying as they talk about the amazing staying power of the Class III Classic.

THIRD WEEK OF SEPTEMBER

Rimfire rifles may not draw the attention of centerfire pistols, but the world of rimfires has changed in recent years due to the “customization” of both rifles and pistols. A perfect example of an accurized .22 rifle is the Smith & Wesson M&P-15 .22. After given the special custom treatment by gunsmiths in the S&W Performance Center, you’ll simply be amazed at the performance of this AR-styled rimfire, whether you’re punching paper or zeroing –in on a headshot on a squirrel barking from a treetop. From buttstock to bore, this rifle gets the full treatment and ends up head-and-shoulders above some of the other .22 rimfires on the market.

We close out our last show by recapping options available in the Power of Air segment and having Patrick Sweeney and Tom Beckstrand talk about their favorite Classic III full auto....you may be surprised by their respective choices.

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It's Bugging Him

I purchased a SIG Sauer Mosquito a couple years back—expecting one spring for high-velocity ammo and one for low velocity. But I received two high-velocity springs. I called SIG and was told they no long supply the low-velocity springs. Imagine my surprise when I picked up the June/July issue to find a letter to the editor describing the two different springs and then an article by Stan Trzoniec on the Mosquito also describing both high- and low-velocity springs.

I called the company again to question them about the springs, and on the call I was also told Mosquito has been discontinued. I subscribe to *Handguns* and enjoy it very much, but would appreciate a bit closer attention to detail in your articles.

ROBERT WOOD
NORTHGLENN, CO

Mr. Wood: You are correct. According to my SIG Sauer contact, the company did start shipping the same-power springs a while back. But apparently the manual that came with Stan's test gun was an older one because it indicated the

provided springs were for different power levels. But it's all moot because, yes, due to a recent change in German export laws, SIG has decided to discontinue the Mosquito and design a better rimfire here in the States. The decision was made without fanfare, and even my SIG contact had to do some checking to confirm the Mosquito's fate.—J. Scott Rupp

Legendary

Patrick Sweeney's "Legend of Super Vel" (June/July) was one of the most accurate articles ever written on Super Vel, and it was outstanding. In the 1970s and 1980s, in the Canal Zone police we were issued Super Vel .38 for our S&W Model 66 four-inch .357s. As one of approximately 500 officers whose lives depended on the Model 66 with Super Vel .38 110-grain, I thoroughly enjoyed the article.

JIM MILLER
CHARLOTTE, NC

Special Ops Drills

I enjoy your magazine. I particularly like the different drills you mention. I think it would be interesting if you could do an article on exactly what the handgun qualifications are for U.S. Special Operation forces. I know the Army Special Forces has its own eight-week CQB course, and I am sure they have to do a handgun qualification in it.

I don't know whether you can even find this info, but if so it would make a good story and give us shooters some idea of what we

could strive to achieve. Maybe a series of articles could be done along this line covering Seals, Special Forces, Force Recon or whatever.

S. BALL
BROCKWAY, PA

Justified?

Regarding "Surveying the Landscape" (June/July): As an NRA certified instructor, I believe we need to be very careful of what we say and suggest lest it be taken out of context, and as gospel, by the inexperienced armed civilian. Richard Nance writes, "Faced with a potential deadly threat, a reasonable tactic may be to draw your firearm."

In most states a defender may not resort to deadly force based on a feeling or thought. He must be able to articulate what the actual deadly threat was before he can justifiably use deadly force. In this case, if you draw your firearm on an unarmed subject, regardless of what the hairs on the back of your neck are doing, and he then draws his gun, he will be the one entitled to "defense of justification."

JEFFREY WEISS
CROTON ON HUDSON, NY

Check Your Six

Why aren't six-shot snubbies more popular? It seems the extra round might make all the difference someday. What's your opinion?

JOHN FRENCH
INDIANAPOLIS, IN

While the extra round could certainly come in handy, today's watchword is concealability, and five-round wheelguns can be made smaller, lighter and therefore more concealable. But all is not lost: Ruger has the new six-shot SP101 .327 Federal; Rock Island Armory offers the six-shot Model 206 .38 Special; and Rossi has the six-shot Model R46202 .357 Magnum.—JSR

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MATCHMAKER

DO THE TERMS “NATIONAL MATCH” AND “MATCH-GRADE” HAVE MEANING?

By Brad Fitzpatrick

IMMEDIATELY FOLLOWING WORLD WAR

I, National Match shooting competitions were held in Caldwell, New Jersey, and later at Camp Perry in Ohio. The pistol of choice at that time was the Colt 1911, and in order to boost their odds of winning, many competitors had their pistols tuned by the best gunsmiths of the period. One of these 'smiths was Colt's Henry Fitzgerald, who began hand-tuning competition 1911s in 1920. These modified Colts were so popular that by the 1930s Colt began offering production competition pistols called National Match models.

Originally, the term “National Match” signified a gun that had been tuned for competition, with the finest components that were hand-fitted by a qualified gunsmith. But over time, various component 1911 parts were labeled as “National Match” or “match-grade” and they varied in quality by manufacturer.

“Both ‘match-grade’ and ‘National Match’ were used to describe components that were made to higher quality standards—closer manufacturing tolerances, higher quality raw materials, slightly oversize in critical fitting areas—than what would be normally accepted as ‘production’ quality in times past,” said Travis Brown at Ed Brown Products.

Travis said his father, company founder Ed Brown, believes the term “match” as a product description started with Lake City ammunition, which was originally manufactured to a higher tolerance than the regular combat ammo and was intended to be used in the National Matches.



J. Scott Rupp

▲ There are no standards for what constitute “match-grade” or “National Match” parts, although typically they’re of better quality. If the parts come with the gun, like on this Ed Brown Special Forces, they’ve already been fitted. If you buy them aftermarket, you may need a ‘smith to fit them for you.

Generally, parts so described were designed to tighter tolerances and required a gunsmith's fit. Guns built with National Match parts often times shot better, but that certainly wasn't always the case.

Brownell's gunsmithing category manager and 1911 gunsmith Tony Barnes says the addition of National Match parts can help you significantly improve accuracy—or they can accomplish nothing at all. The gains you'll see by incorporating match parts in your gun depend significantly upon the skill and knowledge of the gunsmith tasked with the work.

“Generally, National Match parts

are better quality and have tighter tolerances,” Barnes said. “For example, a National Match barrel bushing for a 1911 would have a smaller inside diameter and a larger outside diameter than a stock barrel bushing. This bushing would fit tighter in the slide, and the barrel would fit tighter in the bushing. Those parts also may have needed gunsmith fitting. The gunsmith would fit them to the specific gun to get a better fit. Better quality plus better fit meant better accuracy.”

But better accuracy is not always the end result, Barnes said. Henry Fitzgerald's success in the early 1900s converting standard Colt 1911s

to National Match models hinged upon Fitzgerald's attention to detail and his skill as a gunsmith. The inclusion of National Match parts can mean a lot of hand-fitting. That means that the oversized parts will have to be reduced to fit properly in your gun, providing the tightest tolerances without compromising function, and that took a special skill set that not every gunsmith had.

There are a host of modern aftermarket pistol barrels referred to as "match" barrels, but there isn't a strict standard of measurement when it comes to the application of the term. And, to further complicate things, the terms "National Match" and "match" are often used interchangeably.

"Back then, 'match' and 'National Match' were likely only meaningful in the sense of promoting a higher grade product over a 'standard' grade product within a company's product offering," Travis Brown said.

And he echoed Barnes' comments regarding standards—in that there really aren't any. "In the absence of specific standards, I would expect to see the terms devolve over time into generic marketing

terms, synonymous with 'premium' or 'quality,'" Brown said.

Nighthawk Custom's Shawn Armstrong agrees. "They're just words," he said. "The exterior of match barrels is oversized at the lower and upper lugs and the section that interacts with the barrel bushing. They may also be short chambered so the 'smith can cut the proper shape and depth in the chamber."

Nevertheless, there is the possibility of improving your accuracy with the addition of National Match parts—if you find a gunsmith who is capable of producing that incredibly tight fit.

"All of this is just to make the lockup tighter and delay the unlocking as the gun was designed," Armstrong said.

So from a practical standpoint, what can you expect to achieve by upgrading the National Match parts? Half-sized groups? Half-inch groups? That depends on the skill of your 'smith, Barnes said.


"Any shooter who wants a better fitting, better shooting gun would benefit from National Match parts," said Barnes. "Level of improvement is difficult to say as a lot of that comes down to the quality of the gunsmith doing the fitting. A poorly

fit National Match barrel bushing is no better than a loose-fitting standard bushing."

"Even though today many people do not compete in matches, they prefer parts made to the higher quality standards and are willing to pay a premium for them," Brown said.

"We still use the terms for our triggers and bushings, along with the more current term 'oversize' on parts that are slightly oversize for precise fitting. With our company, since all we make are premium components, 'oversize' versus 'drop-in' may be a better term for today's market."

In Henry Fitzgerald's day, machining practices were not as sophisticated as they are today. Modern CNC and wire EDM machines can hold tolerances to .0001 inch in some cases, so an extremely tight metal-to-metal fit can be achieved with drop-in barrels and bushings.

There's certainly something to be said for knowing your gun was pieced together by an expert who took the time to ensure that everything fit perfectly. That level of work shows up not only in shrinking groups but also in greater pride of ownership. 



Barnes VOR-TX

If you're a hunter, you need to check out the Barnes VOR-TX (BARNES BULLETS.COM). It features the XPB bullet, an all-copper hollowpoint designed for maximum weight retention and pass-through penetration. The gaping hollowpoint expands immediately, and the nose peels back into six sharp petals for sure tissue destruction and humane kills. I hunted with the 250-grain .454 Casull load (1,700 fps) on a "Ruger Inside & Out" episode, and I found it to be really accurate. When my opportunity came to take a wild boar, the results were impressive. I had a 40-yard shot, and the 150-pound hog dropped like a rock. VOR-TX is also available in .357 Magnum (140-grainer at 1,265 fps), 10mm (155 at 1,150), .41 Magnum (180 at 1,520), .44 Magnum (225 at 1,235) and .45 Colt (200 at 1,025).—JSR

OLD SCHOOL | BY BOB SHELL

VELO DOG

IN THE 1880S AND '90S MANY PEOPLE

used bicycles for transportation, especially in Europe. In addition, during that period, many people owned dogs, but they were not generally restrained like they are today. The problem was bicycles were a favorite target for aggressive dogs that can injure a bicyclist, and one solution was to carry a handgun to protect oneself from vicious dogs.

Enter the Velo Dog. The round itself is an odd-looking cartridge resembling a .22 Magnum even though it's a centerfire. The regular load was a 45-grain jacketed bullet rated at 650 fps, producing about 45 ft.-lbs. of energy.

There were also pepper-shot and small-shot loads for bicyclists who did not want to seriously injure a dog, but in truth it would be difficult to seriously injure or kill a large dog with the standard load.

The concept came from Charles Francois Galand, who made the Tue Tue ("kill, kill") and Le Novo revolvers. The Velo Dog was an extension of those designs. In 1894 the Galand Firm brought out the Velo Dog revolver as a six-shot .22 caliber. To my knowledge, no guns in this chambering were ever made in the United States.

The Velo Dog revolver has a folding trigger with a hidden hammer that made it easier to carry on a bicycle. It could be readily removed from a pocket without worrying about snagging. It is double action only, and the trigger pull on my sample isn't too bad.

A loading gate is lifted to load or unload the gun. The cylinder doesn't swing out, so ammo has to be unloaded by poking them out one at a



A The Velo Dog (above) was a low-powered revolver designed for late 19th century bicyclists. (Below) The Velo Dog round (c.) looks like a .22 Magnum (l.) but is a centerfire. It can be formed from .22 Hornet (r.) cases.

time. The cylinder is easy to remove by pushing a button on the rod that holds the cylinder in place.

At one time Remington loaded Velo Dog ammunition, and Fiocchi produced it until relatively recently. So if you've got one or are thinking about buying one, handloading is the way to go—although it's quite a challenge. You can modify .22 Hornet brass by swaging the bottom of the case because the Velo Dog is a straight cartridge.

You could possibly get the correct loading dies, but I imagine they will cost a lot plus you might have to wait months to get them. I shortened a .22 Hornet die so I could size the neck properly. Once that was done, I chamfered case and used a shortened .22 Hornet seating die to seat the bullets.

Due to the age of the gun, I used caution in working up a load consisting of 1.5 grains of Green Dot and a 45-grain roundnose hollowpoint,



which gave me 599 fps at the muzzle and was consistent. This load is close to the published factory ballistics and is about as warm as I wanted because the revolver isn't real strong, and I didn't want to damage it.

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A Look At Today's Handgun Market

Recently the trade publication *Shooting Industry* published 2013 handgun sales figures, the latest available. Most gun companies are experiencing a slow period right now, and that's hardly surprising when you look at the historical data. U.S. handgun production—which reflects demand—has been climbing a proverbial ladder: 2.4 million in 2009, 2.8 million in 2010, 3.2 million in 2011, 4.2 million in 2012 and 5.2 million in 2013. To put that in perspective, the low point of the last 10 years came in 2001 when the combined production of U.S. gun makers didn't even reach 1 million.

Who's building the most? In 2013 the honor belonged to Ruger, which produced 1.4 million handguns (1.1 million pistols, 300,000 revolvers). Smith & Wesson was right behind at 1.2 million (more than 900,000 pistols and roughly 225,000 revolvers).

Rounding out the top 10 in 2013 were (and these are all pistols): SIG Sauer (550,000), Glock (204,000), Beretta (163,000), Kimber (147,000), Taurus (116,000), FN (110,000), Burbak Machine (a subcontractor that makes polymer frames and is an FFL holder, 108,000) and Beemiller (makers of Hi-Point, 93,000).

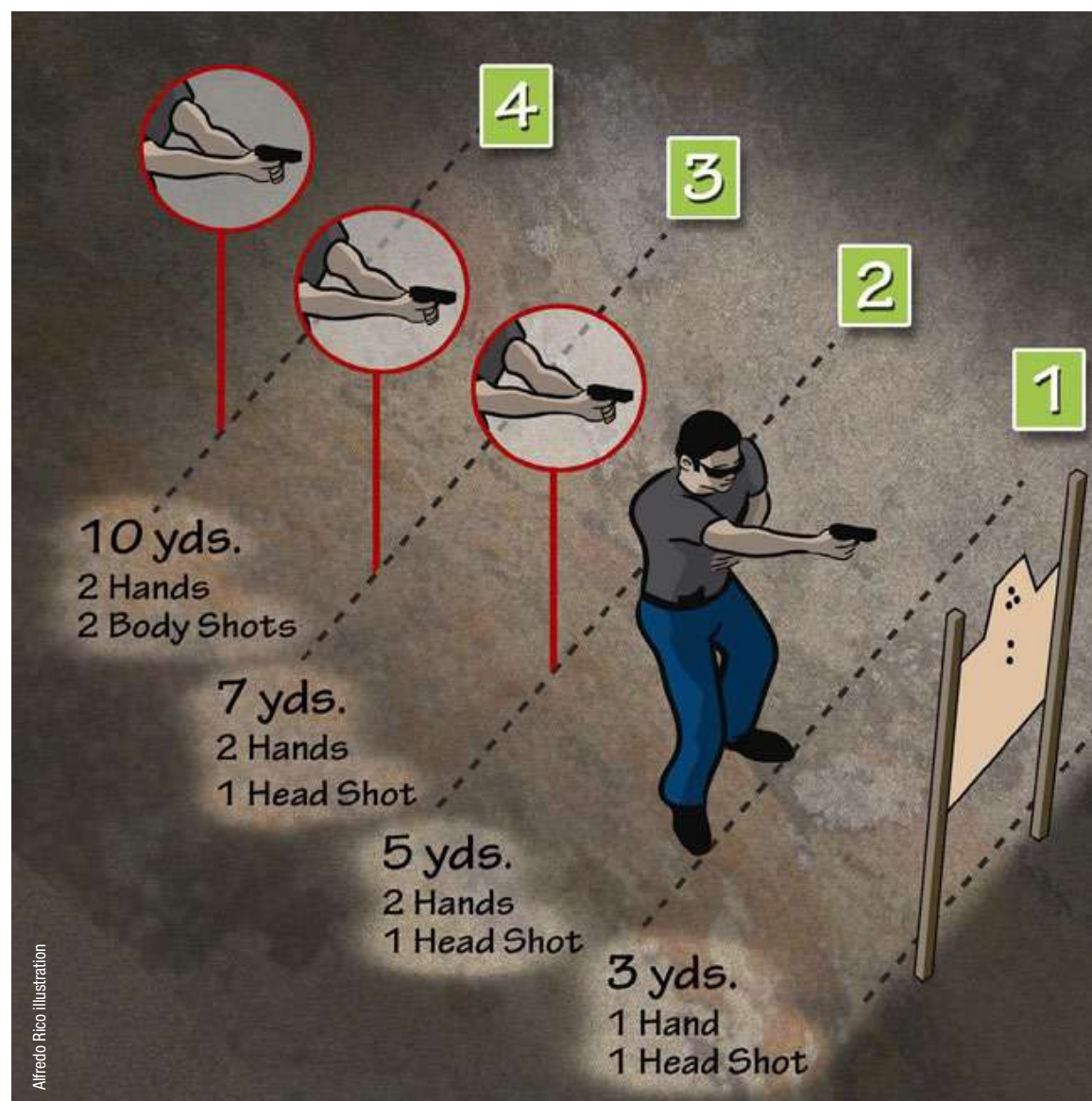
And what are these U.S. firms building? When all companies' pistol production 2013 is tallied, it comes to 4.4 million. And not a single one of you will be surprised to know that the "To 9mm" category accounted for nearly half the total (1.7 million). The "To .380" category reached nearly 900,000 and the "To .50"—another way of saying .45 ACP—was more than 1.2 million guns.

On the revolver side of the ledger, we're talking 725,000 guns in 2013. Again, it's not a shock to see the "To .38" category lead the centerfires with 240,000 guns, followed by 150,000 "To .357" guns. It tails off sharply from there.

And if you're wondering who's buying up all the .22 ammo, there were almost 900,000 rimfires produced in 2013 (635,000 pistols and 227,000 revolvers).—JSR

SKILLS DRILLS | BY DAVE SPAULDING

WIZARD DRILL



RENOWNED TRAINER KEN HACKATHORN

is a huge proponent of accuracy above all else and considers trigger control of great importance. The Wizard Drill is one of the drills he uses to gauge a student's ability to control both trigger and recoil.

GEAR Carry gun/holster, timer, five rounds of ammo, concealing garment.

DRILL Target is IDPA-style with a head box and eight-inch circle center scoring zone. Each stage begins with the handgun in a concealed holster with the draw being part of the 2.5-second par time. The stages are: three yards, one head shot strong hand only; five yards, one head shot using both hands;

seven yards, one head shot using both hands; and 10 yards, two body shots using both hands.

GOAL When you've completed the four stages, you should have three head shots and two body shots on target. Misses or shots after the par time mean you've failed the drill. While the drill might appear simple to those who are using heavy guns with light triggers and long slides, try the drill with the gun you're most likely to be carrying: a pocket pistol or a large-caliber compact pistol from an inside-the-waist-band holster. Good trigger control is an absolute necessity to pass, and guns with long, hard triggers make the drill more difficult.

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THE FBI SWITCH

THE AGENCY GOT IT RIGHT IN SWITCHING TO 9MM—FOR THE WRONG REASONS.

IT'S OFFICIAL. THE FBI IS GOING BACK TO the 9mm. Having resurrected the 10mm and then quickly abandoning it in favor of the .40 S&W, which had been invented pretty much just to satisfy the bureau, the FBI recently announced it was ditching the .40 in favor of the 9mm.

I'm pretty much in agreement with the FBI because the agency's thinking on this is largely rational. Pistols chambered in 9mm hold more rounds and have less recoil, which translates to more control and a higher hit probability, and 9mm costs less than larger calibers. Modern 9mm ammunition expands consistently and fully, and it has sufficient penetration to reach to the vitals of miscreants.

These are all good reasons, but in its executive summary, the agency makes a statement I don't agree with: "9mm Luger now offers select projectiles which are, under identical testing conditions, outperforming most of the premium line .40 S&W and .45 Auto projectiles tested by the FBI."

One of the arguments 9mm advocates have been using is that the modern expanding bullet in 9mm increases its performance to the point that 9mms close the gap between it and larger calibers, even up to the .45 ACP. The thinking is a 9mm bullet that expands to .50 inch or larger performs out of proportion to its starting size.

A generation ago, we were assured the speed of 9mm bullets made up the difference, and testing in ballistic gelatin—with impressive temporary wound cavities—was held up as proof. However, it was determined that if there is an actual benefit to temporary



▲ Yes, today's 9mm ammo is better than ever, but the same advancements have benefited the .40 and .45 as well. The real advantage to the 9mm is it's easier to shoot.

wound cavities, it exists only in rifle caliber velocity ranges. A bullet at Mach 1.2 just won't do, and only a permanent wound cavity can be used as a measure of performance.

To quote John F. Kennedy, "A rising tide lifts all boats." If expanding bullets improve the performance of the 9mm, then they should do the same for the .40 and .45. I have a pile of expanded bullets in labeled containers on the shelf, the results of years of testing. I also have the results of years of tests performed as ballistic gel demos in law enforcement classes. I can use those bullets to do some comparisons.

Let's first look at nonexpanding ball ammo as a baseline. The formula for the volume of a cylinder from geometry class? It's pi times radius squared times height. The diameter of a 9mm full metal jacket is .355 inch. If we take the FBI

maximum allowed penetration (18 inches) as height, we end up with a permanent wound cavity of 1.78 cubic inches. Surprisingly small, isn't it? If we do the same with a .45 ACP, we get a permanent wound cavity volume of 2.87 inches. You don't have to be a math wiz to realize one is larger than the other.

Obviously, ball ammo is not what we or the FBI uses for stopping attackers, so now we move to expanding bullets, using the excellent Federal HST in 9mm with 147-grain bullets (the FBI's favorite) and the .45 Auto with 230-grain bullets as examples. If we keep it simple and assume full expansion diameter for the full 18 inches, then our HST 9mm, which expands to .728 inch, will produce a permanent wound cavity of 7.49 cubic inches. Pretty impressive, and certainly putting the .45 ball to shame. Too bad for the 9mm mavens that the HST

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HANDGUNS | AMMO SHELF

← .45 ACP bullet will expand to .857 inch and produce a permanent wound cavity of 10.38 cubic inches.

The difference between the 9mm and the .45 is that the .45 has one-third more volume. So why does the FBI say this in its executive summary: “There is little to no difference in the wound tracks between premium line law enforcement projectiles from 9mm Luger through the .45 Auto.”

Ballistic gelatin isn’t easy to make, handle, shoot, measure or record the results in. It takes a lot of work to get any information at all, and if you’re using just gel as proof, the differences have to be large before you can say definitively that something is better than something else.

The easy details to measure are

penetration and expansion. With penetration ranging from one foot to two feet, you can easily discern between two bullets whose average penetrations differ by a mere half-inch. And, of course, bullet diameters are simple to measure after they’ve been fired into gelatin.

Wound track diameters, on the other hand, are difficult to measure precisely in gelatin. The stuff is elastic, slippery, moves away and then moves back, and doesn’t leave a clear record of the bullet’s passage. You can’t stick a measuring device into the gelatin track and accurately determine diameter. And if you could come up with anything, you’d be looking for an internal diameter difference of 0.129 inch—an eighth of an inch.

And this is where the FBI falls

down on the analysis. Think of the wound track in gelatin as a recording device. The bullet expansion is digital high-def. You can measure every aspect of it precisely: diameter, retained weight, shape of the expanded petals. These are all recorded in unchanging metal and remain that way as you handle them and measure them.

Conversely, the gelatin wound track is more like a wax cylinder from the time of Thomas Edison. Looking at the gelatin track and the gelatin track alone for differences between pistol bullet performance is like listening to those wax cylinders. You can hardly hear anything for the noise. The bullets themselves are far better records of just what happened in the gelatin.

And that is where the FBI went



wrong. It should have just stuck with the things that are irrefutably true, such as the faster firing rate and higher hit rate the 9mm affords most shooters. Not to condescend, but most law enforcement officers are pretty bad shots. FBI agents—at least those who are on the front lines chasing criminals—are marginally better.


No agency can afford to do much more than make sure its officers are reasonably safe when handling firearms. Ammunition cost, range time and personnel time are all big budget factors, and the fact is 9mm ammo costs less than .40 or .45. It also takes less ammunition to get someone up to speed and demonstrate proficiency with the 9mm, resulting in less range time and less instructor's time.

There's a great acronym—TANSTAAFL (There Ain't No Such Thing As A Free Lunch)—at play here. The .45 ACP offers greater performance. But to make use of that performance requires more (and more expensive) ammo, more range time, more instructors and, for a significant percentage of the people involved, more-frequent refresher trips to the range.

As private citizens we are willing (or not) to make the commitment in time, ammo and effort to acquire the extra capability the .45 ACP affords us. We spend the money, go to the range, put in the time. But then we don't have to explain to the prosecutors why our investigations are going more slowly than promised. "We needed more range time to stay current with our .45 Auto

pistols" is not going to pass muster as an excuse.

No, the FBI is simply facing reality. It hires people to solve crimes and only occasionally get involved in gunfights. For most of the agents, for most of the work, in most of the areas where they are stationed, the 9mm is plenty good enough. The bureau can readily afford to train its agents, spend money on ammunition and keep them working on cases instead of working on gun skills.

However, I'd bet dollars to donuts there will still be units within the FBI—Hostage Rescue Team and SWAT, for example, which have been shooting .45s and not .40s—that will continue to fill out requisitions for the bureau's supply of .45 ACP ammunition. 

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INTO
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GETTING STARTED

COMMON-SENSE ADVICE ON SELECTING YOUR FIRST CONCEALED-CARRY GUN.

THE FIRST RULE OF A GUNFIGHT IS TO HAVE

a gun. If you don't have one, don't get into a gunfight. The problem is having one when you need it. And let's face it, we all look for a "Goldilocks" handgun—not too heavy, not too small, not in a caliber thought to be unsuitable for self-defense.

I've chased this mythical handgun for decades and have had some very good ones (which I kept) and some totally wrong ones (which I sold), but I still don't have what I see as an ideal defensive handgun for all occasions. I've long been convinced one doesn't exist.

Choosing a defensive handgun becomes difficult, since most of us live, work and play where carrying a firearm openly is simply not done. This limits your choices to those handguns that are small, light and highly concealable.

"Back in the day" we could and often did rationalize we had no need for a carry handgun. The old shotgun behind the door was good enough. We also convinced ourselves we were doing everything right by living in a safe neighborhood and not going to, frequenting or passing through the "bad" areas. And if we needed to be in such vicinities, we would then "armor up." Even now, we try to do our business only in daylight hours and stay out of lonely areas if possible. If not, we drive with all the windows up and doors locked.

We do all this to convince ourselves nothing bad will happen to us. This belief lasts until something does: Bad things do happen to good people.

Within these limitations, we want a handgun offering the best concealment, ease and reliability of operation and with which we can make



▲ The size of the gun's grip is critical, and there are tons of options—meaning you should be able to find a gun that works for you. Here are some examples of the variety you can find. Clockwise from 11 o'clock: Colt Pocketlite, NAA .22, Seecamp .32, Kel-Tec P-32 and Kahr CT 380.

effective hits. Factors to consider are the gun's action type (semiauto or revolver), size, weight, caliber and cartridge capacity.

Other factors to include are how the handgun and you "fit" together for your physical makeup, vision, hand size and ability to manipulate and control the gun when firing it—or your ability to fire it at all. For example, a few years back I met a friend at our range with a North American Arms .380 ACP double-action pistol. Turned out he couldn't shoot it, at least to his satisfaction, because his fingers were too large to

go into the trigger guard.

Looking at the current handgun market for concealable handguns, smaller and lighter ones are heavy favorites—mostly subcompact semiautos, with a few small revolvers thrown in for good measure. It seems the .380 is becoming the go-to semiauto caliber because guns so chambered are lighter and hold more rounds than similarly sized guns in larger calibers.

However, the smaller and lighter guns come with a cost as well: increased felt recoil, which only gets worse the lighter the gun. This

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← also applies to pistols with a short grip length. The revolver has similar problems of size, weight and felt recoil from .38 Special and larger calibers. Most revolvers in this caliber will handle +P rounds, but they sting, if not actually hurt, when fired with +P. (And only macho men and masochists fire .357 Magnum rounds in “no-weight” revolvers more than once.)

A friend told me why he chose .32 ACP over .380 ACP in a Kel-Tec pocket pistol. He shot both at single and multiple defensive targets and distances. He consistently made better hits using the .32 ACP and was quicker with follow-up shots. He said he mentioned this to another shooter who immediately launched into a tirade about how and why he should use the better “man-stopper” .380 ACP round, regardless of his better hits with the .32 ACP. Politely, my friend agreed to end the discussion because, in the real world, only good hits count.

Grip length is a really important factor in how well you can hold and shoot the pistol. A grip that’s too short will not only affect your ability to control and shoot the gun, but also may make it simply hard to hold onto—possibly causing you to fumble the draw or, worse, drop the gun.

The normal reaction is to try and catch it as it falls, which is exactly the worst thing to do. It’s all too easy to pull the trigger as you try and catch the gun. Second worst can be if you drop the gun in a real confrontation. Who’s going to get to the gun first: you or the threat?

A full three-finger grip on the gun is best for accuracy and recoil control. Second best is a two-finger grip, with the third finger either partially on the frontstrap and/or curled under the bottom of the frame. The third best—or, better put, the first worst—is with only one full finger on the frontstrap, with the other three

getting whatever purchase is possible.

Proper fit also is checking to make sure neither your trigger finger nor gun-hand thumb (or any of your hand and fingers) interferes with fully pulling the trigger rearward. It’s all too easy to stub your trigger finger on your gripping thumb or on the rear loop of the trigger guard. And don’t ever get the notion you will remember in the heat of a fight that you need to grip the gun a certain way. If you’re having problems, practice with a different firing grip or get a different gun.

A last thought on using a subcompact pistol from my late friend Roger Tucker, a police officer who almost always carried a full-size 1911 tucked in his pants cross-draw and usually beneath other clothing. (He did this so long he had a permanent outline of his 1911 on his lower torso.) I knew him to only ever own two small guns. One was an inexpensive .25 ACP that he had for just a month or so and a Kahr in .40 S&W.

I saw the latter only once, briefly, at the range when he moved it from his waistband to his shooting bag. I commented about it, and he said he was still debating about carrying it. Otherwise, he continued to carry the 1911 every day regardless of weather or social conditions unless it just wasn’t possible to carry a gun. He commented he would rather not carry at all than use a small handgun. I asked why, and he replied, “If I need a gun, I want one that will do the job. I know what I can and can’t do with the 1911. I’m not sure about the others.”

He made a valid point: Knowing what you can and can’t do is better than wishful thinking. Take time in choosing a defensive carry handgun. Don’t be rushed or pressured into something. If possible, shoot a few before you buy. There are no do-overs in a gunfight.



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> KIMBER MICRO BEL AIR

Part of a special edition collection available at Kimber Master Dealers, the Micro Bel Air has a mirror polish on its slide and small parts, a Bel Air Blue frame and ivory Micarta grips. The word “exquisite” comes to mind here. If you’re not familiar with the Micro (which graced our June/July cover), it’s a single-action .380 semiauto with a 6+1 capacity and a weight of 13.4 ounces. This particular version does not have night sights or ambi thumb safety.

{ \$810, KIMBERAMERICA.COM }



< RUGER REDHAWK .45 COLT/ACP

Get the best of both worlds with the new Redhawk, which can handle .45 Colt and .45 ACP—the latter via moon clips. And with the Redhawk’s robust construction, you get the capability of going up to .45 ACP +P for excellent self-defense performance. The round-butt-frame revolver has a 4.2-inch half-lug barrel, adjustable black rear sight and red-ramp front. Metal finish is satin stainless, and the grips are laser-checked hardwood.

{ \$1,029, RUGER.COM }



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{ \$230, BLACKHAWK.COM }



< SIG SAUER ELITE

New offerings for this ammo lineup, which we covered last year, are now available in .40 S&W and .45 ACP. The .40 adds a 180-grain SIG V-Crown hollowpoint bullet (985 fps) in addition to the 165-grain load, and new for the .45 ACP are 230-grain (830 fps) and 185-grain (995 fps) V-Crowns—which join the current 200-grainer.

{ SIGSAUER.COM }

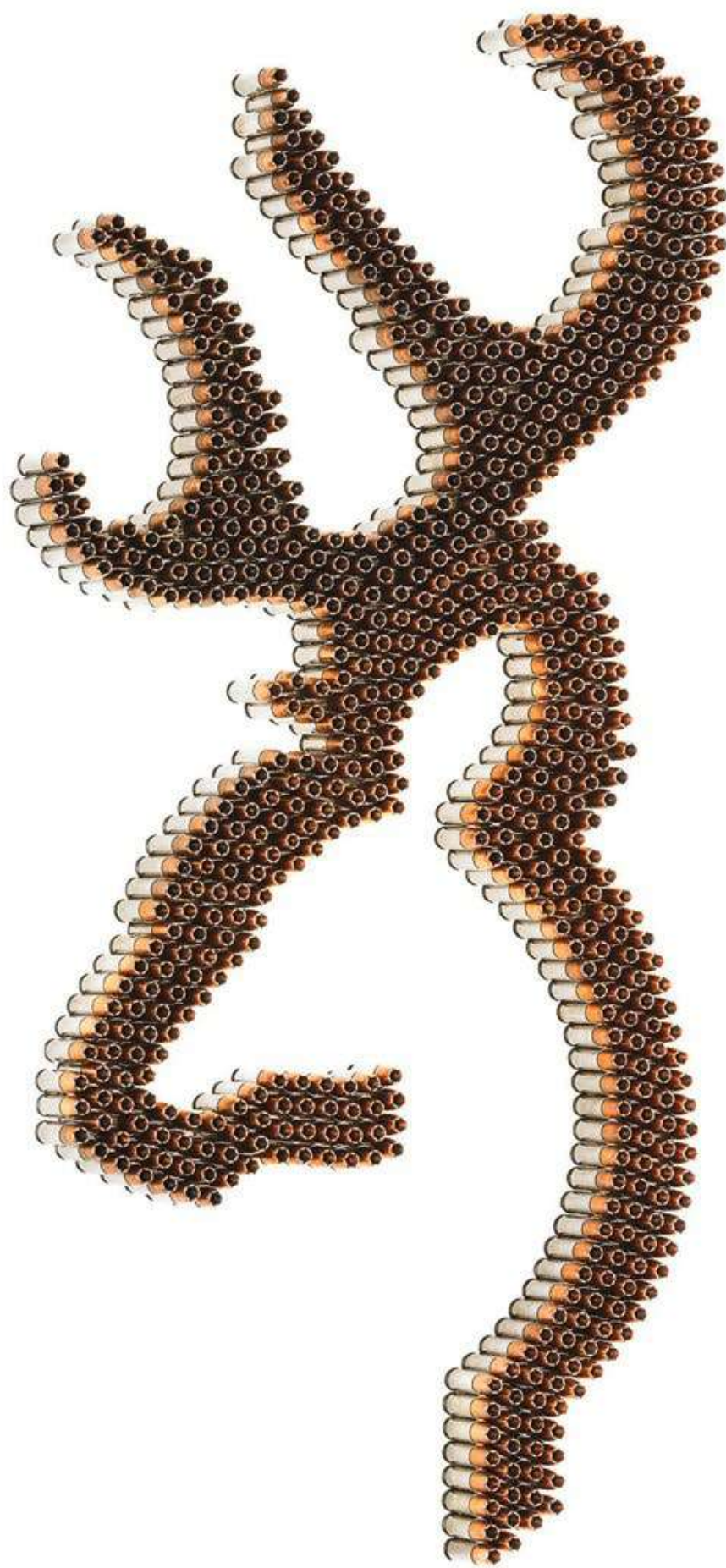


> HOPPE'S 1.2.3. DONE!

These new kits include a caliber-specific BoreSnake along with two-ounce bottles of No. 9 bore cleaner and gun oil. And if you’re a beginning shooter or new to the BoreSnake, it comes with easy-to-understand photo directions. Handgun options include .22, .38 (9mm, .380, .38/.357), .40/10mm and .45.

{ \$26, HOPPES.COM }





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RELOADING ESSENTIALS

THOUGHTS ON WHEN, WHY AND HOW TO PERFORM THIS VITAL SKILL.

RELOADING A SEMIAUTOMATIC PISTOL IS

not complex unless you have to do it fast. Speed comes into play in three circumstances: training, competition and combat, with the last being most critical. I once heard a famous instructor say, “Competition offers the same level of stress as a gunfight.” The only thing I can think is he’s never had someone try to kill him. The stress of having bullets whiz past is like no other, and if you have had this experience, you know what I am talking about.

Serious shooters know how difficult and complex a fast reload can be. The hands don’t work normally, the fingers fumble, and magazines don’t align like you think they will. Now add someone trying to take your life while you are moving, yelling and lacking motor skill and you will understand why reloading needs to be as simple as possible.

“Combat stress” is a bitch, and any technique added to your skill sets should take this into account. What is combat stress? It’s the physical and psychological phenomena that occur when our brain perceives danger and prepares the body for action—fight or flight. Sensory nerves pass danger perception to the body’s systems, which dump chemicals that create an increase in circulation and energy to certain body systems and a downshift into a maintenance mode for less important ones.

This is why people involved in combat lose digital dexterity. The fingers do not function as well as they did prior to combat. Yes, the fingers will perform, but they will be less likely to perform tasks that have not been practiced to a level of “unconscious competence,” where they can be performed without thought.



▲ Reloading isn’t hard. Reloading quickly can be, especially under stress. And since your life could depend on this skill, you need to give it serious thought—and then practice the skills you need.

When practiced to this level, most any skill can be performed, even under extreme stress, when the chemical reaction of the body might be working against them.

You might wonder what this has to do with the combat reload. Reloading a pistol quickly is a complex motor skill, requiring both fine and gross muscle movements to work together, and as I just explained, fine motor skills will diminish when someone is trying to kill you. Add to this your gun running out of ammo at what might be the last moments of your life and I think you can see why practicing the reload until it can be performed without conscious thought is important.

What I am going to say now will light up Internet gun forums: Don’t shoot your gun dry. Currently, it is common in combative shooting courses to practice nothing but

slide-lock reloads, the emergency reload. The argument is “You might as well shoot the gun dry in training as that is what you are going to do in a fight.”

While this is certainly possible, why are we training to make it inevitable? Slide lock is a really bad time to reload, especially if your opponent sees it. Exchanging magazines quickly is difficult enough, but now add the time and effort to release the slide.

And what happens if, during the fight, the slide does not lock open? You might be pressing the trigger on an empty gun as your only load stimulus failed, resulting in deadly lag time. Consider an empty gun the same as a broken gun, both requiring physical manipulation, so let’s load when we can instead of when we have to.

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HANDGUNS | ON PATROL

← reload (simply dropping the magazine out of the gun), we make the task of having a fully loaded gun less complicated and faster. I know what you are thinking: “Why would you drop perfectly good ammo on the ground? You might need it.”

While true, are you willing to risk your life for a few rounds of ammunition? Let’s say you have engaged in a firefight and expended an unknown number of rounds. Your attacker is moving, maybe trying to flank you, and you have no idea what is coming next. Would this be a good time to do a speed reload, or should you try to save ammo by performing a complicated tactical reload (retaining the magazine)?

By performing a speed reload, I know I have 16 rounds in my Glock 19. How many rounds did I eject to the ground? I don’t know, but I never give up a known for an unknown, and I’d rather trade a few ejected rounds for the greater importance of having a full gun. I’m doing the reload when I know I have the opportunity instead of at some future point when the slide locks back—when I have no idea how much time I’ll have to reload or if I’ll even get the chance.

Any time you add something to a procedure, it will increase the time it takes to accomplish the skill. Sure, you can practice the slide-lock reload to reduce the overall time, but it will still take longer because dropping the slide on a semiauto takes time.

Some advocate a “power stroke” where the shooter comes up and over the slide—grasping it overhand and then pulling back vigorously, actually hitting yourself in the shoulder, ensuring “complete slide retraction.” It seems a bit excessive considering the slide only has to move a quarter-inch or so to be released and full recoil spring compression occurs shortly thereafter. In addition, the shooting and sup-

port hand end up awfully far apart, adding time to re-grip the pistol.


Competition-based shooters advocate using the shooting-hand thumb to drop the slide, which is certainly the fastest. It adds only about a tenth of a second to the reloading process, but the thumb is being tasked with multiple functions in a short period of time (hitting both the magazine release and the slide lever). If the timing is off just slightly, the shooter could wind up with an empty gun.

On numerous occasions I have seen shooters drop the slide before the magazine is fully inserted, which results in a dead trigger. The shooter then has to do a tap-rack, which slows the shooting time even further. In a competition this is no big deal; in a gunfight it’s deadly.

Possible Solutions

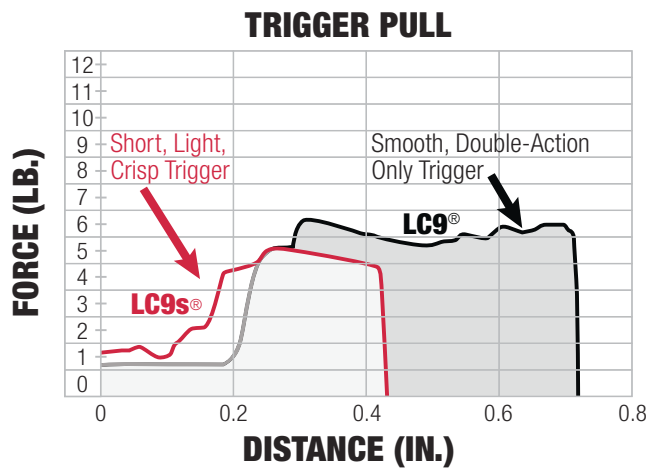
In my classes I show both of these skills along with their advantages and disadvantages. I also offer several possible solutions. If using the slide lever, consider using the support hand thumb to push down. This adds a few tenths but ensures the magazine is seated first.

If an overhand grip is preferred, how about releasing the support hand and instantly cupping it, turn the slide into the hand, pull back enough to release it and then re-grip the pistol? It’s much faster, just as sure and simplifies the process. Of course, you could dispense with this whole ordeal and just reload before you run the gun dry.

Give this reloading process critical thought and choose carefully. Don’t just go by tradition. While I am a fan of competitive shooting, I will be the first to tell you what works in competition might not be best when your life is on the line. Practice the techniques discussed here, evaluate them and decide what is best for you in your real world of work. 

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PADDLE OR BELT?

NO, NOT FOR SPANKING. PROS AND CONS OF TWO COMMON HOLSTER TYPES.

THE LAST TIME I WAS AT MY LOCAL GUN

store, picking up some test firearms, the owner of the store was talking to a customer about holsters. The customer was in his late 30s and buying a new holster, but he was lamenting the fact that he already had so many holsters at home. He'd bought them over the years, but for one reason or another, they hadn't worked out.

"They fill a whole drawer," he said. "I call it the Island of Misfit Holsters."

"I know what you mean, I've got a whole closet of them," Al, the store owner, admitted.

Finding a holster to fit a specific firearm isn't tough, especially in this Internet age. Finding a holster that fits your gun and fits your body and meets your needs (concealment, duty, etc.) while being comfortable during periods of extended wear is a much more difficult proposition. Quite often there is no substitute for trial and error, but here are some helpful suggestions to help guide your choices.

Most holsters are intended for use around the user's waist on the strong side. As this column is only so long, I'll leave a discussion of inside the waistband holsters for another time. As for outside the waistband holsters, there are two main mounting choices: belt loop and paddle.

Many modern holsters are modular and sold with both mounting options: a belt loop attachment and a paddle. In fact, many gun manufacturers are selling their pistols with holsters, and some provide both a paddle and belt loop attachment for these holsters.

Paddle holsters feature a curved piece of polymer on the back of the holster designed to fit around the wearer's waist/hip. Pressure from a belt, along with the form-fitting nature of the paddle, is designed to



▲ Many modern holsters such as this Safariland ALS 7378 are provided with both a belt loop and paddle attachment. The belt loop attachment is somewhat adjustable for cant and belt width.

keep the holster in place. I believe Safariland was the first big holster company to sell paddle holsters (still does), but now just about every holster maker offers them.

Paddles are designed to be slid between the wearer's belt and pants. There are usually small hooks or a channel in the paddle designed to position/secure the belt and keep the holster steadier. However, the belt channel is fixed in size and not adjustable for the width of your particular belt.

Paddles, however, can also be slid between the wearer's pants and body. Many people do this for two reasons: Paddles are wide and trouser belt loops often prohibit the placement around their waist that people want, and sliding the paddle inside the pants tends to keep it tighter to the body and reduce holster wiggle.

Because of this, it is possible to wear a paddle holster without a belt, although I don't recommend it if you've got an alternative. The paddle will slide and flop about to a much greater extent.

Even if you've got your belt tight and your holster mounted correctly, a paddle holster will wiggle more than one on belt loops. Because of the shape of the human hip (yes, even on men), I've also found the paddle tends to make the gun's muzzle stick out from the body and the butt dig into your side.

So what advantages are there to a paddle holster? There's one, and it is a big one: convenience. A paddle holster can be put on or taken off without removing the belt, and as mentioned, if you don't mind a lot of wiggle, you don't even necessarily need a belt. I once saw a sleep-deprived detective in the middle of a double homicide investigation wearing a SIG P226 in a paddle holster over sweatpants. It bounced with every step, but he was armed.

Whether the holster is leather or plastic, there is not a whole lot of mystery to belt loop holster attachments. Thread the belt through them (and possibly one of the belt loops of your pants as well), tighten your belt, and you're ready to go. →



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HANDGUNS | ESSENTIALS

← Many leather holsters offer two belt slots at the rear of the holster. This is to adjust the tilt of the pistol on your hip. While canted pistols look cool and often conceal better, they often make for an awkward draw.

Many belt loop attachments on modern polymer holsters are adjustable for the width of the belt, and that is an option you should take advantage of. Whatever you can do to reduce or eliminate holster wiggle is worth it. Because the belt loops of my jeans weren't in quite the right place, I used to sew an extra belt loop in my jeans to help support my holster. I don't do that anymore because I switched brands of jeans and picked up a much stiffer belt.

Speaking of which, most people don't realize just how important a quality belt is when wearing a holster. In some cases your choice of

belt is as important as your holster. The belt and holster need to work together. They are a system. Many of those holsters gathering dust in closets throughout America probably worked just fine; they simply needed to be mounted on a sturdy belt.

If your belt holster is flopping around, your belt is not properly supporting it. The greatest holster in the world isn't going to work well at all if it's mounted on a belt that is too thin or weak to support the combined weight and bulk of the holster and firearm. Thin dress belts may look stylish but are not designed to support anything, much less anything heavy. If you're looking for a one-inch dress belt to securely hold anything heavier than a light compact auto, you are going to be disappointed.

And you will need to wear the belt tight around your waist. When

wearing a holster, your belt is no longer a fashion accessory: it's a support structure. Cinch it as tight as is comfortable; otherwise, you are not using it to its full potential. If you can grab the butt of your holstered pistol and slide it back and forth on your hip, either your belt isn't tight enough or you're not properly using your belt loops to help lock the holster in place.

I think most people carrying guns at their waistline are "under-belted," by which I mean their belts are too thin/weak to properly support the guns they're carrying. Instead of beefing up their belts, they try to fix the problem by going with a "steadier" holster. That is why some people carrying paddle holsters stick the paddle between trousers and body, to help with the wobbling.

I think this epidemic of subpar belts has created a trend in holsters

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I call the “amoeba.” You’ve seen them: holsters (usually polymer) that take up a huge amount of real estate around the wearer’s waist, giant amorphous pancakes of plastic curved to fit the wearer’s hip that often have hooks or snaps reaching far to the front and rear to go around the belt and improve stability. These holsters seem to be getting bigger every year, spreading around people’s waists like amoebas.

Considering how cell phones are getting too big for pockets and many people are clipping them to their belts, the last thing I think people need is a giant holster taking up unnecessary real estate on the belt line. A holster so wide it extends four or more inches past the gun in either direction is completely unnecessary unless you’re going for the high-speed contractor/trainer look.

Just get a good belt. A good place to start to see all the options that are available these days is Galco (GALCOGUNLEATHER.COM).

Nylon “trainer” belts are all the rage with the tacticoool crowd. They are usually at least 1.5 inches wide and do a very good job of supporting the weight of any size pistol and spare magazine pouch, but in my opinion, they look out of place with anything but tactical pants.

If you really prefer the look of a narrow dress belt, one option is Galco’s Concealable Contour Belt, which is 1.5 inches wide at the sides and rear but tapers to dress belt thin (one inch) at the front buckle area.

Thick and wide (at least 1.25 inches if not 1.5 inches) leather belts designed for handling the weight of firearms do exactly that, and look good doing it, but I’ve found that after a

few years of daily carry, leather belts tend to stretch and weaken. However, Galco and many other companies offer belts made from more exotic materials than simple leather. I have not tried alligator, shark, or stingray belts, but they are all stiffer than standard leather.

My current belt has a layer of Kevlar between two pieces of leather for impressive stiffness, but unfortunately, the manufacturer has stopped making them. Fellow gun writer Dave Fortier has recommended belts made by THEBELTMAN.NET, but I haven’t had a chance to try them. (*Ed. note: I have one and love it.*) They are thick, dual-layer belts, and I am interested in the combination horsehide/bullhide belt. From experience I know horsehide holsters are much stiffer than leather; it looks like leather but wears like plastic.



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GO GORILLA

BY PATRICK SWEENEY

DAN WESSON'S NEW SILVERBACK 1911 IS PACKED WITH LOTS OF CUSTOM FEATURES.



run in some pretty selective 1911 circles, guys who don't blink at dropping a couple of grand for custom work—this after they've found a suitable 1911 on which to build. And one thing I've found to be consistent in this group is the opinion that Dan Wesson 1911s are smokin' hot deals for the money.

Aficionados look at the fit, finish and details and wonder how the company can build such a gun at that price level. And in a lot of cases, they don't customize a Dan Wesson because its 1911s already come with a lot of the formerly custom features we now expect and have been this way from the beginning.

The latest one to arrive here is the Silverback, and as a change of pace, I asked the company to send a 10mm instead of .45 ACP (it's offered in both chamberings).

Why the name Silverback? "We already had the Razorback," said Keith Lawton, the company's vice president of operations. "Being a two-tone gun with a stainless slide, it made sense. Not to mention that the silverback gorilla is a formidable beast in itself."

Keith also commented on the firm's decision to offer it in 10mm. "The 10mm is such a versatile cartridge, it could be used for hunting, competition and self-defense," he said. "Rounds can be tailored to the ballistics of .40 S&W all the way up to hot .357 Magnum,

depending on application."

And he's right. While a .45 ACP can be used for competition and self-defense against human attackers, it comes up a bit short when you consider hunting or bear defense as a possible use.

The 'smiths at Dan Wesson start with a full set of stainless steel forgings: frame, slide and barrel. The Silverback gets the same hand-fitting found in the company's top of the line Valor series. The frame is hand-fitted to the slide, and once they are mated, the match barrel gets installed in the slide and fitted. The trio then never leave each other, remaining together all the way to your hands.

But hand-fitting is just the start. Dan Wesson not only builds solid 1911s with a vault-like fit, it also includes attractive cosmetic details. The slide is machined to accept a Dan Wesson adjustable rear sight, which fits into the long-time standard Bo-Mar dovetail. The Bo-Mar is no longer being made, but Dan Wesson makes its own sights to fit that size dovetail and has Trijicon insert the tritium cells into each sight. The front sight is a Novak dovetail, transverse to the bore, and is also drilled and has a tritium cell installed.

The slide is left as bare stainless, with the flats polished to a medium luster. The cocking serrations are nine square-bottomed slots, angled to the bore.

Dan Wesson has milled a rib on top, between the sights and the length of the slide. While the rib is reminiscent of the Colt Gold Cup, it is better executed and lines up perfectly with the barrel hood cut. The front sight base is machined at an angle where it would otherwise protrude out of the slide rib. This keeps the rib going all the way to the muzzle and not be interrupted by otherwise jutting blocks of a front sight base. Well done.

Dan Wesson elected to go with ball-end cuts on the front end of the slide, lining them up with the front edge of the dust cover. I have come to like this look, and now we can get it without the long wait and extra cost of a custom gunsmith. Designers have noticed this is a growing trend and wanted to make the Silverback even more attractive to those of us who approve.

The frame is not left bare stainless. Once it has been fully machined and fitted, it is treated to a black nitride chemical bath. So you get the best of both worlds: stainless but not shiny. But that's getting too far ahead.

The frame is in many regards just your normal 1911 frame. But, again, the details matter. The slide stop lever is shortened to be slightly below flush with the frame on the right side, and the hole for the slide stop shaft is beveled. That way you do not have a protruding pin head to perhaps be pushed out of alignment when you're indexing your finger on the frame, →



Photo by Michael Anschuetz
Art Direction by Heather Ferro

GO GORILLA

← but it can still be disassembled when you go to clean it.

The frontstrap is machine checkered, with every diamond perfect, and a recessed border is milled along the frontstrap at the edge next to the grips. At the top, the frontstrap has been gently relieved so your second finger can get higher on the frame. This is not done to an excessive degree, but it's enough so you can get your hand a smidge higher on the frame.

The mainspring housing is flat, perfectly checkered and is correctly proud of the rear of the frame. Both the frontstrap and the mainspring housing are checkered at

25 lines per inch. This is for many shooters and gun builders the new standard because 20 lpi can be too hard on your hands and 30 lpi is often too delicate, showing wear and bumps. At 25 lpi you get a non-slip grip without pain, one that stands up well to use. The magazine well is moderately beveled.

The Silverback grips are G10s from VZ Grips. An immensely strong synthetic construct, G10 is a laminate of glass-fiber cloth, layered and impregnated with epoxy resin. The Silverback grips are Ragnarok Black Gray, which has two plies of gray G10, one ply of black and then machined with a

Ragnarok pattern for an even more non-slip grip. (And if you're not up on your Norse mythology, Ragnarok translates to "the doom of the gods"—the end of a cycle in which the cosmos is destroyed and then re-created.)

The grips are held on by means of hex-head screws, also blackened stainless. The stocks are a bit thicker than GI grips but not objectionably so. The machined-in pattern offers a good compromise between non-slip and easy-to-adjust your grip. Some grip patterns are so "sticky" that once your hand has touched the pistol, you can't shift your grip short of letting go and re-grabbing it.

One aspect of the modern 1911 is it is now possible to "manufacture" a pistol while not actually cutting any metal. This isn't the way Dan Wesson does things. Keith Lawton told me Dan Wesson makes its own thumb safety, as well as the slide stop, mag catch, extractors and ejectors—all milled from bar stock.

So it's a complete Dan Wesson pistol, with all parts machined from either bar stock or forgings, whichever is best for that application. This requires a lot of machine time, but it means Dan Wesson has absolute control over the dimensions. It also selects the best material for the task the part is asked to perform. The ham- →



▲ Dan Wesson makes its own parts—in this case parts designed specifically for the 10mm—and the grips are G10 from VZ Grips. The frame is relieved for a high grip on the gun, and the trigger is excellent.



▲ The Silverback features a rib milled atop the slide, and the the tritium front sight is beveled to match the rib—a nice touch.



▲ The slide flats are polished, contrasting nicely with the black frame. The slide/dust cover has a ball-end cut that mates handsomely with the frame.

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← mer, sear and disconnecter are made of tool steel for the utmost in hardness, durability and wear resistance.

The trigger is one of the best I have felt on any but a full-house custom 1911 in a long time. Once you take up the slack, there is no discernable creep. When the sear releases the hammer, there is a small (and necessary) overtravel, but not any more than is needed. And the hammer falls at a clean four pounds.

The safety controls are exemplary. The thumb safety is just big enough you can't miss it but not so big it is in the way when you carry. It clicks up and down with certainty and stays where you set it.

The grip safety is large enough to protect your hand from the hammer but not any more than it needs to be. The bottom end has a raised platform, so your hand will be certain to depress it on the draw.

The grip safety has to be depressed a little more than halfway before it will clear the trigger, but in numerous range session—chrono work, accuracy testing and drills—I never had it fail to work. I prefer to have the grip safety release at one-third of the way in, but since this one worked 100 percent of the time, I'm not going to give it a demerit.

When I did a detailed strip of the Silverback, I found Dan Wesson elected to go with a 22-pound spring. This is normal for a 10mm. It works for .45 ACP-level loads, and you won't beat the gun up with full-power 10mm.

If you plan to use your Silverback for competition and will be shooting much softer ammo, be sure and practice and test. If you find you have occasional stove-pipes, then you'll want to investigate something along the lines of a normal 18-pound .45 recoil spring. If you don't switch back from the

18-pound recoil spring, you won't harm your Silverback with hunting loads, but the recoil will be quite a bit snappier.

If you plan on switching back and forth, it would be prudent to use some spray paint to mark the springs. Degrease, then spritz the rear half of each a different color. Once dry, reassemble with the one you need.

The guys at Dan Wesson and I are in agreement that full-length guide rods are not necessary, and the Silverback has a normal guide rod and recoil spring retainer. The slide is numbered to the frame, so there is no chance of a mix-up once they have been fitted. The barrel is an integrally ramped design, both for better feeding (there's no gap the bullet nose has to jump over) and to offer more case support for those who will be using hunting loads.

The frame has to be machined to provide room for the integral-

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ramp barrel, and in looking it over I noticed something else: the slide stop tab cut is normal. When Colt was first making the 10mm, the rail would crack right where it cut the hole for the slide stop tab. Rather than argue with customers over a cracked frame, the firm just cut off that part of the rail.

“We’ve never had a frame crack, ever,” Keith told me, and if Dan Wesson isn’t worried, then I won’t, either. And if it does crack, so what? It isn’t a load-bearing part, so it will never be a problem.

With the pistol stripped, I checked the fit of the bushing to the slide and the fit of the slide to the frame. With the recoil spring pressure off of it, the bushing could be turned with bare hands and yet did not show any wobble. The slide had a marginal amount of movement. I could feel it shift ever so slightly in my hands when I tried to twist the slide on the frame, sans barrel.

But I’m not sure it is enough I could even measure it. Clearly, this is a tight and well made pistol.

Why did I ask for a 10mm? In this day and age, anyone can make a

1911 feed .45, but the 10mm isn’t so easy. The case is narrower, and the loaded cartridge is longer—messing with Browning’s feeding dynamics. Plus, the hotter loads →

ACCURACY RESULTS DAN WESSON SILVERBACK				
10mm Auto	Bullet Weight (gr.)	Muzzle Velocity (fps)	Standard Deviation	Avg. Group (in.)
Civil Defense JHP	60	2,431	21	3.25
Hornady FTX	165	1,226	10	2.00
Hornady Flexlock	175	1,135	16	2.50
Federal Trophy Bonded	180	1,225	12	2.75
Hornady XTP	180	1,161	13	2.25
HPR JHP	180	1,252	13	2.50
ProGrade JHP	180	1,192	19	2.25
Sig Sauer FMJ	180	1,227	18	2.25
Wilson Combat XTP	180	1,288	20	2.50
Buffalo Bore FMJ	200	1,208	1	2.75
CCI Blazer TMJ	200	996	8	2.00
Doubletap Nosler JHP	200	1,138	15	2.75
Doubletap WFNGC	200	1,210	10	2.75
Hornady XTP	200	1,090	15	2.25
Buffalo Bore LFN	220	1,169	3	3.00

Notes: Accuracy results are averages of five five-shot groups at 25 yards off a Sinclair front shooting rest. Velocities are averages of 10 shots measured on a LabRadar chronograph set 15 feet from the muzzle. Abbreviations: LFN, lead flatnose; WFNGC, wide flatnose gas check; TMJ, total metal jacket





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← can increase slide velocity to the point feeding problems arise. In the early years, a lot of problems stemmed from the use of modified 9mm and .45 parts in 10mms, but Dan Wesson's experience with the caliber has paid off.

"Dan Wesson has been producing the 10mm 1911 for over 12 years now," Keith said. "Since there are no books or manuals telling you how to build one, there has been some trial and error over the years. Now that we are large enough and produce enough 10mms we have specially made parts just for our 10mms."

DAN WESSON SILVERBACK

TYPE: 1911

CALIBER: .45 ACP, 10mm Auto (tested)

CAPACITY: 8+1

BARREL: 5 in.

OAL/WIDTH/HEIGHT: 8.75/1.45/5.5 in.

WEIGHT: 38.5 oz.

FINISH: polished stainless slide flats, Duty black nitride frame

GRIPS: Ragnarok black gray G10

SIGHTS: adjustable tritium night

TRIGGER: 4 lb. (measured)

PRICE: \$1,883

MANUFACTURER: Dan Wesson, CZ-USA.COM
(UNDER "PRODUCTS")



▲ The Silverback's designers wisely chose 25 lpi checkering for the frontstrap and mainspring housing, a pattern that provides a secure grip without tearing up your hands.

If you are looking at the 10mm as a two-legged predator abatement tool, then you won't need the top-end 10mm loads. In fact, they will be too powerful. But if you read the previous issue of *Handguns* you know there is no lack of defensive ammo for the Big Ten.

But when it comes to hunting or for something that might dissuade a bear from making mincemeat out of you, big, hard bullets at full 10mm velocity—like 200-grain full metal jackets at 1,200 fps—are the way to go. This is low-end .44 Magnum territory. A full metal jacket or hard-cast flat-nose 10mm bullet pushed at this speed will penetrate to a fare-thee-well. I've had to put an old Kevlar vest on the back of 36 inches of ballistic gelatin to catch one.

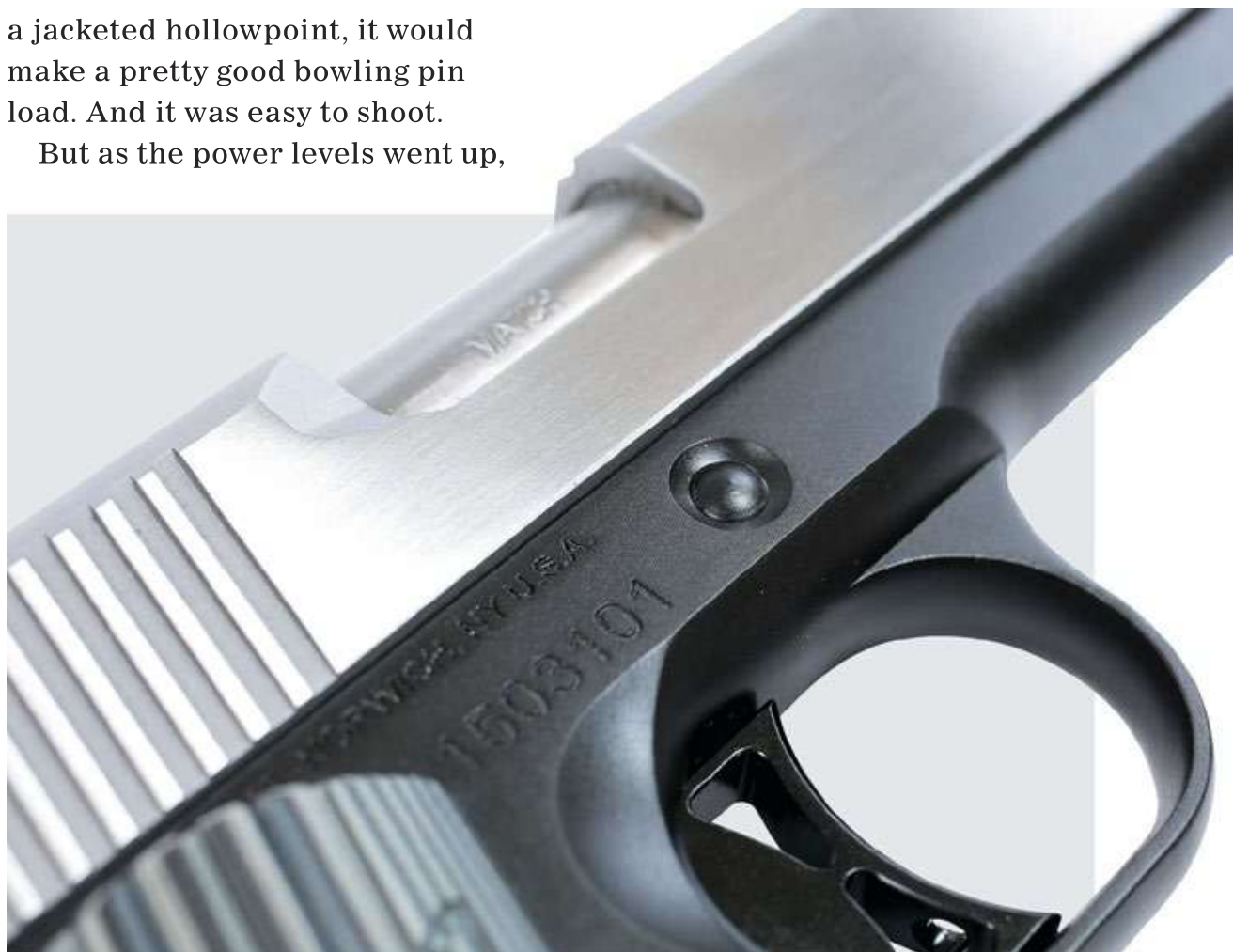
When it came time to do the accuracy testing, the Silverback delivered, in spades. Of course, the heavier loads were more work than the light ones. At the low end of 10mm power, the CCI Blazer is well over the USPSA Major power-factor threshold. Were it loaded with a jacketed hollowpoint, it would make a pretty good bowling pin load. And it was easy to shoot.

But as the power levels went up,

it became more and more work to shoot good groups. By the time I got to the heaviest ammo, I found I had about a box of ammo's worth of bench time in me. After that, unexplained fliers started showing up. And we all know the explanation for that; it's called flinching. But when I did my part, the accuracy was bragging-level good.

The Dan Wesson Silverback comes in a lockable hard case, with a pair of magazines, bushing wrench, lock, small bottle of oil and owner's manual. The Silverback gives you get a 1911 loaded with features, at a quality level to make a lot of custom gunsmiths envious and at a price that will make them weep.

What else I found was this. Do your part, and the Silverback will deliver power into the low end of the .44 Magnum, in tight groups, and with the potential fast reloads we've come to expect from a pistol. Competition, carry, practice, hunting or on your belt while fly fishing in bear country, the Silverback can do it all. ○



▲ The slide stop pin is shortened to be flush with the frame flat, and the hole is slightly beveled to make disassembly easier.

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PENNY PINCHER

BY DAVID M. FORTIER

CENTURY ARMS' TP9 DELIVERS A LOT OF GUN FOR UNDER \$400—MAKING IT A DECENT OPTION FOR THOSE ON A BUDGET.



It seems the poor economy has finally caught up with the firearms industry. With the Great Panic at an end, the market is slow, and firearm prices are down. While centerfire ammunition remains high, and .22 LR is difficult to find at a decent price, it's a buyer's market for guns. Basically, now is the time to be buying rifles, pistols, magazines, parts and accessories

I know many readers are looking for ways to make their hard-earned dollars go farther, and not everyone is interested in going the surplus route. One

economy gun I think makes the grade is the TP9 imported by Century Arms. While it resembles a Walther P99, the 9mm Luger TP9 bears the logo of a company called Canik55. Street price on this model is downright cheap—I've seen it on sale for around \$300—so I tested one to see if it was a good value or a dog.

While I know quite a bit about Century Arms—a large importer with facilities in Boca Raton, Florida, and Georgia, Vermont—I was unfamiliar with Canik55. I learned the manufacturer is located in northcentral Turkey and is owned by Samsun Yurt Savunma, one of Turkey's largest defense contractors. It makes products as diverse as rocket and missile launchers, sniper rifles and aviation components. It is ISO 9001 certified and supplies pistols to the Turkish military and police—as well as several law enforcement agencies and military organizations around the world.

My TP9 test sample arrived nicely packed in a foam-lined plastic case. Popping it open I found, along with the pistol, a spare 17-round magazine, magazine loading tool, spare backstrap, holster with belt loop and paddle mounting attachments, two spare front sight blades, rear sight tool, cleaning rod, bore brush, chamber flag, lock and manual. It was like Christmas. This particular version sports a desert tan finish with black accents.

As I mentioned, the pistol resembles a Walther P99, but it is not an exact clone. Without a doubt the designers of the TP9 sat down with a Walther on their desks, but externally the Turkish pistol is a bit different. The TP9 is a modern design built on a polymer frame. Dimensionally, the TP9 is a midsize self-loader with a four-inch barrel made of cold-hammer-forged 32CrMoV12-10 steel with six lands and grooves in a right-hand twist. The TP9 is 7.1 inches long and 5.7 inches high, and it weighs 27 ounces even. The magazine release button and slide release lever are set up for right-handers, but the decocker is ambidextrous.

The frame is contoured and fairly comfortable in the hand. It sports interchangeable backstraps to allow it to fit medium and large hands. The pistol came fitted with what I would consider a medium backstrap with a spare one for larger hands. Backstraps are easily changed by pushing out a pin with the provided tool.

The TP9 has three-dot sights: a square post front and adjustable rear. The rear sight is adjustable for windage while the front sight is replaceable for elevation corrections.

The TP9 is a double-action, striker-fired pistol, and operation is short recoil via a modified Browning tilting barrel. The trigger design is a bit unconventional. If the shooter so desires, he or she can depress the →

PENNY PINCHER

← decocker, which is located on the rear of the slide. This provides a long double-action trigger pull of a little more than 10 pounds. Subsequent shots will have a short reset movement of about 1/4 inch and a pull weight of about six pounds. If the shooter chooses not to de-cock, then there is a long take-up of about two pounds. When take-up is complete, the trigger breaks at



▲ Unusual for a striker-fired gun, the TP9 has an ambidextrous decocker located at the top of the slide.

approximately six pounds. The TP9 incorporates four passive internal safeties. In addition, a cocking indicator, which can be both easily felt or seen, protrudes from the rear of the slide when the pistol is cocked. The TP9 feeds from 17-round steel magazines (where lawful), providing a hefty reserve of ammunition on tap should the situation require it. If you need more, a gaping magazine well opening speeds reloads. Another nice touch is a low-profile lanyard mount. Perhaps I'm just old fashioned, but I like lanyard mounts, and the TP9 features a low-profile one. The dust cover sports an accessory rail. The slide is nicely contoured and features a huge external extractor. Removing the slide assembly is a simple matter. After removing the magazine and ensuring the gun is unloaded, retract and release the

slide before pulling the take-down lever—located on either side of the frame above the trigger—straight down. Then, with the pistol pointed in a safe direction, pull the trigger and remove the slide from the front of the frame. The captured recoil spring and barrel can then be easily removed. Reassembly is also quick and easy. To see how Century's TP9 performed, I gathered together five different loads ranging from an ultra-light 60 grains up to 135 grains. Loads included brass and steel cases as well as standard and +P pressures. During my accuracy testing, magazines inserted easily, rounds chambered smoothly, extracted and ejected almost without issue. Jacketed hollowpoints posed no problems, but the pistol has a heavy spring and ejection →



▲ The pistol sports three-dot sights and a large external extractor. Unfortunately, it was 100 percent reliable only with stout ammo.

ACCURACY RESULTS CENTURY ARMS CANIK55 TP9				
9mm Luger	Bullet Weight (gr.)	Muzzle Velocity (fps)	Standard Deviation	Avg. Group (in.)
MagSafe Defender	60	1,868	71	3.7
Magtech SCHP	92.6	1,271	31	2.5
Wolf FMJ	115	1,173	18	3.0
Black Hills + P JHP	124	1,191	22	2.7
Hornady Critical Duty + P	135	1,072	19	3.0

Notes: Accuracy results are averages of four five-shot groups fired from a rest at 25 yards. Velocities are averages of 10 shots measured with an Oehler 35P chronograph 12 feet from the muzzle at an ambient temperature of 75 degrees at 1,030 feet elevation. Abbreviation: FMJ, full metal jacket; JHP, jacketed hollowpoint; SCHP, solid copper hollowpoint



▲ The pistol features interchangeable backstraps—medium and large—that are easy to change simply by driving out a pin.

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PENNY PINCHER

← wasn't 100 percent with Wolf's steel-case load. Accuracy from the bench was acceptable for a rack-grade service pistol; results are shown in the accompanying table.

Recoil was fairly mild, with Hornady's 135-grain +P Critical Duty load being the snappiest. This is a fantastic load and has become one of my top picks for personal protection. Actual terminal performance in law enforcement use has been impressive.


With the bench testing out of the way, I moved to running drills from three to 15 yards. Here the TP9 performed well overall. I found the double-action pull to be quite usable while the single-action pull has a short reset. The controls were easy to reach, and magazine changes were a snap. Practical accuracy was quite good.

Once I got the hang of the trigger, I made quick work of both my dueling tree's steel paddles along with plates on my plate rack. I was actually a bit surprised at how well I shot with it.

However, I must say I don't like the trigger. It feels spongy, especially when dry-firing it. I'm also not a fan of the grip, but it did point well for me and, again, I shot it well.

Century Arms' TP9 is not a fancy or expensive work of art, and it's certainly not a match pistol. It's just a simple working pistol designed for self-protection, one that's simple to operate, reliable and accurate.

I was a bit ho-hum on this pistol when I began working on this article, but I have to give credit where credit is due: It shot just fine on the range and ran 100 percent with hotter loads. Practical accuracy was excellent, and it shot to point of aim out of the box.

The best part of the TP9 is its price. Century Arms' suggested retail price on this model is \$390, and as I mentioned, street price will be a lot less. Considering all the goodies the TP9 comes with and its performance, it's a good buy. 

CENTURY ARMS CANIK55 TP9

TYPE: DA/SA striker-fired semiauto

CALIBER: 9mm Luger

CAPACITY: 17+1

BARREL LENGTH: 4 in.

OAL/HEIGHT/WIDTH: 7.1/5.7/1.2 in.

WEIGHT: 27 oz.

CONSTRUCTION: desert tan polymer frame, desert tan steel slide

TRIGGER: double-action pull, 10 lb.; single-action pull, 6 lb. (measured)

SIGHTS: 3-dot; rear adjustable for windage

PRICE: \$390

IMPORTER: Century International Arms, CENTURYARMS.COM



 The TP9 ships with a bunch of extras, including a holster with both paddle and belt-slot attachments.

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BY BRAD FITZPATRICK

INSIDE WAISTBAND

1| BLACKHAWK ARC

Ambidextrous design featuring flexible injection-molded holster with two belt clips to accommodate 1.5- and 1.75-inch belts. Passive retention detent with adjustment screw allows shooter to adjust retention level. {\$22}

2| BLACKHAWK LEATHER TUCKABLE HOLSTER

Made from premium leather and injection-molded plastic. Designed for appendix, cross-draw, strong-side and behind-the-hip carry. Removable/adjustable belt clips allow for custom cant and ride. Retention level is tension-adjustable. {\$87}

3| COMFORT HOLSTER BENTLEY

Constructed of breathable suede backing with gel pad between Kydex holster and shooter's body. Cling Tabs allow for adjustable ride height, cant and tension of the clips. Tuckable design allows for easy removal. {\$125}

4| COMFORT HOLSTER JAGUAR

Kydex holster pocket with gel cushion between holster and shooter's body. Breathable suede backing. Tension adjustable single belt clip allows for rapid removal of the holster. Hardware is rustproof. {\$100}

5| DESANTIS INVADER

Tuckable design with body pad made of synthetic materials, including edge-bound neoprene and ballistic nylon. Holster pocket is made from thermo-molded Kydex. Glass-reinforced nylon C-clips are user adjustable with provided hex wrench. J-clips available separately. {\$45}



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6| GALCO CARRY-LITE

Four different IWB models (Stow-N-Go, Tuck-N-Go, Walkabout, Waistband) now available in black. Constructed of premium center cut steerhide with neutral cant that allows carrying in several positions. {\$33}

7| GALCO KINGTUK 2

Saddle leather backing plate with Napa leather front and Kydex holster pocket. Comes with adjustable magazine pouch that attaches to backing plate with Velcro. Comes with metal belt clips that accommodate belts up to 1.75 inches wide. Carry height and cant are adjustable. {\$90}

|8|



8| WRIGHT LEATHER WORKS BANSHEE

Premium leather tuckable IWB pancake holster with either High-Ride leather straps for medium or large pistols or Deep Concealment Clips for low ride on smaller handguns. High-Ride leather straps come with Pull-The-Dot snaps for secure placement and rapid release. {\$98}

BELT/DUTY

9| BLACKHAWK EPOCH LIGHT BEARING DUTY HOLSTER

Three levels of retention, including Pivot Guard, which opens with thumb activation. Retention system engages firearm ejection port. Auto Lock system reinforces master grip positioning and accommodates firearms with common rail light systems. Available with matte, plain or basketweave exterior. {\$108}

|9|



10| BLACKHAWK GRIPBREAK

Constructed of three-layer laminate with 1,000-denier Cordura or drum-dyed Italian leather. Inner injection-molded copolymer shell and release guard. Patented auto-locking system secures firearm. Fits belts up to 1.75 inches wide. {\$47}

11| DESANTIS CHAMP

Compact ambidextrous design allows shooter to switch from right- to left-hand carry by moving a single screw. Features adjustable cant and trigger guard detent and adjustable tension device to secure firearm. {\$40}



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12| DESANTIS T-GAT SLIDE

Trailing-slot scabbard with premium saddle leather construction. Molding and thumb break provide retention; also features an integral molded sight track. Can be worn cross-draw or strong-side. {\$75}

13| DESANTIS NYLON SAFETY STAR

Level I security holster designed for police and security professionals. Constructed of rigid molded ballistic nylon with a polymer core. Also includes a thumb break and rotating hood. {\$125}

14| DESANTIS RANGEMASTER

Designed primarily as range or competition holster and available in either leather or Kydex. Comes with slotted belt hanger (2.25 inches on Kydex model, 2.5 inches on leather holster). Both models come with adjustable tension device. {\$70}

15| GALCO CORVUS

Kydex belt holster that can be converted to IWB. Open-top design with adjustable cant and ride height. Includes 1.5- and 1.75-inch belt slots as well as straps for IWB carry conversion. {\$80}

16| HOGUE CARRY

Polymer construction with Automatic Retention System and draw-angle-adjustable paddle and belt plate. Available in black or carbon-fiber weave. {\$50}

17| HOGUE DUTY

Polymer construction. Includes Stage Two Auto Retention System as well as a rotating hood. Available in black or carbon-fiber weave. {\$100}

18| HOGUE J-FRAME CARRY

Designed to fit S&W J-frame revolvers. Constructed of heavy-duty polymer with carbon-fiber weave exterior. Utilizes Hogue ARS retention system. Available in right- or left-hand versions. {\$50}



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19| SAFARILAND 537 GLS

Open-top belt-slide holster with Grip Lock System that releases with contact from middle finger of shooting hand. Offers tension adjustment and flexible pancake design that conforms to shooter's body. Fits 1.5-inch belts. Available in plain black. {\$56}

20| SAFARILAND 547 PRD

Polymer construction and open-top design. Incorporates Pinch Retention Device that pinches both sides of the trigger guard and releases when gun is drawn. Fits 1.5-inch belts. Available in a variety of finishes. {\$37}

21| SAFARILAND 578 GLS PRO-FIT

SafariSeven lightweight nylon blend construction accommodates multiple gun models with a single holster. GLS middle finger release system. Comes with injection-molded paddle and adjustable belt loop that allows for a variety of carry options. Available in black or flat dark earth. {\$55}

22| WILSON COMBAT EDGE

Molded thermoplastic pancake holster construction with smooth interior and external sharkskin pattern. Friction-fit Level 1 retention system with adjustable tension screw and FBI cant. Fits full-size 1911s with or without light rail. {\$70}

23| WILSON COMBAT PANCAKE PRO

Kydex leather thermolaminate construction with suede lining. Pancake design with sight track and body shield to prevent rubbing. User adjustable for cant and draw tension. Fits full-size 1911s. {\$75}

24| WILSON COMBAT LOW PROFILE II

Leather construction pancake holster with slight forward cant. Reinforcement band on top allows for easy holstering. Custom safety guard protects thumb safety and clothing. Fits full-size 1911s with or without rail. {\$130}

25| WRIGHT LEATHER WORKS PREDATOR

Premium leather construction with open-top pancake design and stiffening strap to keep mount of holster open for holstering. 1.75-inch belt slots are cut so holster rides at a 15-degree forward cant. Custom cut body shield is gun-specific. {\$88}



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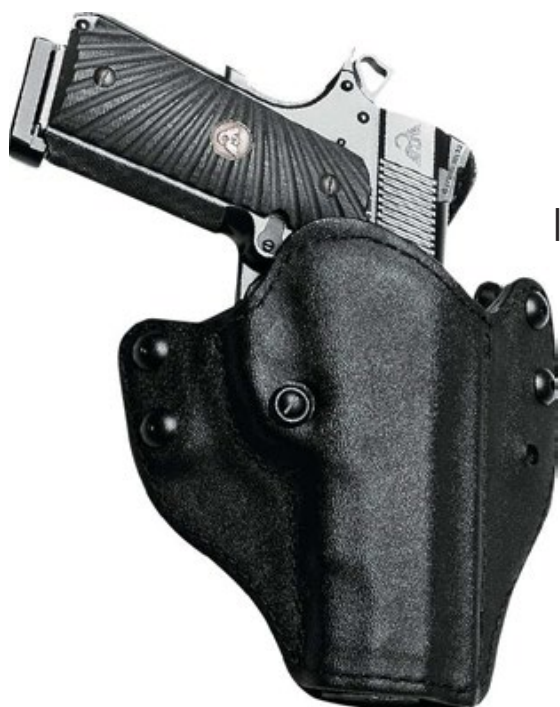
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2015 HOLSTER ROUNDUP



|26|



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|27|



DEEP COVER, OFF-BODY, OTHER

26| CROSSBREED CARGO POCKET ROCKET

Premium leather backer with Kydex holster pocket. Designed to fit in a cargo pocket and comes with Pac Skin outer leather to prevent the holster and backer from sliding. Square shape of the leather backing conceals the shape of gun and prevents printing. {\$37}

27| DESANTIS INCOGNITO

Constructed of 1,060-denier ballistic nylon with Velcro fastener. Three sizes accommodate most compact semiauto pistols. Designed to be worn on the belt in either a horizontal or vertical position. {\$50}



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28| GALCO CARRYSAFE

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29| STRYKR AGENT COVERT CARRY PANTS

Chino-style dress pants with drop-down holster pocket that allows for one-handed draw and prevents gun from slapping against the leg or pulling down on the pants. Allows shooter to carry without printing. {\$289}



[29]

CONTACTS

Blackhawk BLACKHAWK.COM

Comfort Holster COMFORTHOLSTERS.COM

Crossbreed CROSSBREEDHOLSTERS.COM

DeSantis DESANTISHOLSTER.COM

Galco GALCOGUNLEATHER.COM

Hogue HOGUEINC.COM

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**SPRINGFIELD ARMORY
MARINE CORPS OPERATOR**

TYPE: 1911

CALIBER: .45 ACP

CAPACITY: 7-round magazine

BARREL: 5 in.

OAL/HEIGHT/WIDTH: 8.5/4.75/1.19 in.

CONSTRUCTION: steel; olive drab Armory Kote frame, black Armory Kote slide

WEIGHT: 40 oz.

SIGHTS: Novak night

SAFETY: grip, thumb, internal locking

TRIGGER: 4.75 lb. pull (measured)

PRICE: \$1,299

MANUFACTURER: Springfield Armory,
SPRINGFIELD-ARMORY.COM

SOLID TO THE CORPS

BY JAMES TARR

**THE MILITARY'S CONSTANT QUEST FOR THE
"RIGHT" HANDGUN DESIGN BENEFITS US. MEET
SPRINGFIELD'S NEW MARINE CORPS OPERATOR**



There are watershed moments in history. Often they are not obvious until years, if not decades later, but sometimes the historical significance of certain events is undeniable as they are happening. For many firearms people there was no more clearer moment in U.S. history to signal the point at which our republic began to fade from glory than the day our armed forces replaced the battle-proven M1911A1 in .45 ACP with a 9mm.

The Beretta M9 has not enjoyed the same kind of uncontested reign with our soldiers the 1911 did. Barely 30 years later, many in the military are using issued Glock and SIGs instead of the M9. While nobody has yet been able to convince the entire military to return to John Browning's baby, there are some units still using the 1911—or at least want to. Which is why we have the Springfield Armory Marine Corps Operator.

A few years ago the Marine Corps put out a bid for a 1911—not to equip the entire Corps but the Marine Corps Forces Special Operations Command, created when Marine Corps Force Recon was integrated into U.S. Special Operations Command following 9/11.

The U.S. military has a seemingly never-ending history of bids to adopt new guns, most of which don't go anywhere and never result in the official adoption of anything. But these bids have had a positive result, at least as far as shooters are concerned. When the U.S. military can't make up its collective mind, all the new designs dreamed up by the firearms manufacturers end up being sold to us. Springfield's Marine Corps Operator has been around for a few years, but it has been newly updated specifically for the commercial market.

The Springfield Marine Corps Operator pistols are far from original GI spec. The first thing you might notice is the color scheme. The frame is olive drab below a black slide. Among the tactical crowd, tan seems to be the new black, so maybe green is the new tan. The pistol is also treated to Springfield's Armory Kote coating, which is a spray-on corrosion-resistant finish superior to traditional bluing.

This is a full-size, all-steel Government model pistol with a frame rail, which means it is not just big but heavy (40 ounces, empty)—probably bigger and heavier than most people would want to carry concealed. Notice I didn't say it's too big to carry concealed. I carried guns this big and heavy for decades (and in fact still do), but it takes commitment and the ability to dress around the gun.

The Marine Corps' original bid called for specific features, including an accessory rail, night sights and an ambidextrous safety. The Marine Corps Operator has all of them.

Atop the slide are Novak night sights with Trijicon-produced tritium inserts. The inserts do not have white outlines, so technically this is not a three-dot sighting system; however, the glass and steel of the tritium inserts do reflect a bit of light so they do work a bit as three-dots during the day. At night, of course, they glow green due to the radioactive tritium.

As 1911 slides go, the Marine Corps Operator's is rather simple. It has a round top, and the left flat is marked "OPERATOR CAL .45" while the right sports "SPRINGFIELD ARMORY" and the company's logo. The slide serrations are of the flat-bottom style that seems to be popular lately, which I'm happy about. Not only do I think they are more attractive than traditional angle-cut serrations, they are also more aggressive. Springfield was generous with the serrations, putting them front and rear.

The front of the slide has a ball radius cut where it curves down to meet the front of the frame. This is a sharper curve than the original Browning design and actually easier to machine. I prefer its appearance over the traditional gentler angle.

Since we're there, let's talk about the end of the frame. When Springfield Armory uses the term



▲ The grip safety doesn't allow quite as high a grip some designs, but the flat contour on the underside of the trigger guard helps. The mag release is stock GI, and Tarr thought an upgrade was in order.

SOLID TO THE CORPS

← “Operator” in a name, it means the 1911 has a frame rail. This pistol’s frame has a three-slot accessory rail for mounting lights or lasers. It has been cut off at an angle to match the ball radius cut in the slide. This is more a style choice than anything else, and it looks good.

In case you’re wondering, this is the “Butler Cut,” so named for pro shooter Taran Butler, who began having this done to his competition 1911s a decade ago. Once again, something from the competition world has found its way into the “tactical” world, without the tactical world giving credit where credit is due.

The barrel is a five-inch stainless steel model fitted to a match stainless bushing. The barrel is the traditional non-ramped design. The chamber entrance has been throated and polished, and the frame ramp has been adjusted and polished as well.

The Marine Corps Operator uses the original non-full-length recoil spring guide rod, which was probably specified in the original Marine Corps bid. There’s nothing wrong with full-length guide rods, but there’s nothing wrong with the original design, either. A standard recoil spring plug allows you to press-check the pistol, although this will take some effort as it comes with an extra-power recoil spring.

As a platform for this new model, Springfield Armory used its Loaded Series pistols. These pistols are far from the GI 1911s fielded by the military during World War II. They offer custom features at less than a custom price.

One “feature” most people might overlook on this gun is the fit. The Marine Corps Operator is put together as tight as any custom 1911. On my sample there was absolutely no play between the slide and frame, and the barrel locked up tight. Pushing down on the barrel hood with the slide forward (the

quickest way to check barrel fit) gave me nothing. Poorly fit barrels will move if you push down on the hood when the pistol’s in battery.

Every Springfield Armory 1911 I’ve tested or got my hands on in the past few years has been just as tight. Whatever gunsmith, final assembly or quality control process the company is using, it produces uniformly well-made and tight 1911s.

The frame is olive drab, but all the frame parts (except the trigger) are black, which produces a nice look. The pistol sports what Springfield calls a Delta hammer, a skeletonized Commander-style hammer with a D-shaped cutout.

The trigger is an extended aluminum three-hole model. As this pistol does not have any added firing pin safety parts in the slide screwing up the trigger pull quality, the trigger pull on my sample was rather nice. After a short take-up, the trigger pull broke at a relatively crisp 4.75 pounds. Advertised trigger pulls for these pistols are five to six pounds.

The thumb safety is an extended ambidextrous style. It was slightly easier to engage than disengage, with positive clicks—which means it was adjusted perfectly. All the rear edges of the safety were smoothed and blended to the frame, so there were no sharp edges to dig into my hand during shooting.

Unless you’re building a “retro” 1911, nobody wants a stock GI grip safety, and the Marine Corps Operator features a beavertail grip safety on a Wilson cut. This cut is a little easier to machine but doesn’t allow the pistol to sit as low in the hand as an Ed Brown cut, but the difference is minimal.

The front of the frame is technically not undercut but rather cut

straight back, allowing the shooter’s hand to sit a little higher on the gun than the original’s gently curving frontstrap. This pistol is a cut above a stock gun, so I thought Springfield could’ve done better than a straight-up GI serrated magazine release. Yes, it does the job—empty magazines drop free of the pistol without fuss—but I would’ve expected a release that was extended or checkered.

The mainspring housing is steel—like every other piece of metal on the pistol apart from the trigger—adding to its not-insubstantial weight. The mainspring housing is flat and checkered. Flat mainspring housings are smaller than arched mainspring housings and therefore fit more hands and also allow more positive depression of the grip safety, which are the reasons they are much more popular. →



▲ The G10 grips are grooved, and Springfield has gone to a new frame texturing—wide irregular hexagons—that’s not quite as aggressive as checkering but works well.



▶ As an Operator, the frame sports an accessory rail. The gun also features a ball-radius cut on the slide and dust cover that is continued on the frame, and the stainless steel bushing is tightly fitted for accuracy.

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SOLID TO THE CORPS

← The mainspring housing features an internal safety lock Springfield began offering several years ago. Use one of the provided keys to turn the tiny keyhole and the hammer cannot be cocked. I think locking up an unloaded gun in a safe or hard case (such as the one provided with this pistol) is a much simpler and safer solution than adding extra unnecessary parts to a gun, but then I'm not a lawyer or a politician.

Springfield's original version of the Marine Corps Operator had wraparound Pachmayr rubber grips, which were specified in the origi-

nal Marine Corps bid. Wraparound rubber grips do provide a non-slip surface, but they're very 1988—especially considering the CNC machining available today. And rubber grips tend to bind on clothes—though the Marine Corps was not bidding on a concealed-carry pistol.

The new Marine Corps Operator features a machined gripping surface on the front of the frame. Technically, the shapes machined into the frontstrap are wide and flat interlocking irregular hexagons. Springfield has yet to come up with a catchy name for the pattern,

which it chose specifically because the design provides a nice gripping surface but is not as aggressive as traditional checkering, which some people find too abrasive. This compromise gripping surface won't chew up hands or clothing.

The new frame texture is combined with new G10 grips. These black-and-green grips are diagonally grooved, although the different colors of the G10 layers may make the grooving a little hard to discern. The grooves run from the bottom rear to the top front on each side and, like the texturing on the frame, provide a moderate gripping surface. They aren't nearly as aggressive as the golf ball-like patterning seen on some grips, but between the frame texturing and these grips, if you can't keep the gun locked into your hand while shooting you're doing something wrong.

The magazine well of the pistol is nicely beveled, and the pistol is

ACCURACY RESULTS SPRINGFIELD MAINE CORPS OPERATOR				
.45 ACP	Bullet Weight (gr.)	Muzzle Velocity (fps)	Standard Deviation	Avg. Group (in.)
Nosler JHP	185	989	17	1.9
Black Hills JHP	185	972	14	2.0
Wilson XTP	230	857	15	2.2
Winchester JHP	230	868	22	2.4

Notes: Accuracy results are the averages of four five-shot groups fired at 25 yards from a sandbag rest. Velocities are averages of 10 shots measured 12 feet from the muzzle with an Oehler Model 35. Abbreviations: JHP, jacketed hollowpoint



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supplied with two blued steel seven-round magazines. Eight-round magazines are the current commercial standard, but the seven-rounders follow the whole military flavor of the pistol. There are a number of aftermarket 1911 magazine manufacturers, and while there aren't any I don't recommend, my favorites are the PSI ACT-Mags.

As part of their Loaded Series of pistols, Springfield Armory sells you not only a gun but also just about everything you need to start carrying or competing with it. In addition to the pistol and two magazines, you get an injection-molded holster, double magazine pouch and a large, lockable, hard-sided case.

The holster is an abbreviated paddle model with an adjustable tension screw. It holds the pistol at a butt-forward or "FBI" cant. The double magazine pouch has integral belt loops and holds the magazines in a V-shape. It has a tension screw


as well. Neither the holster nor the mag pouch is top of the line gear, but if you don't have any of your own, they'll work just fine until you can get something better. Also, using the provided equipment will give you valuable insight about what you like—or don't like—about it, which will help inform you when you go shopping for an upgrade.

Manageable Recoil

For those of you in the audience who only have trigger time behind modern plastic wonder-nines, the steel frame of a 1911 has no flex or give like you'll get with polymer-framed guns, and the .45 ACP cartridge has more recoil than a 9mm. As a result, the recoil impulse is sharper and harder. However, because the Marine Corps Operator weighs more than 40 ounces empty, recoil is more than manageable if you have a proper grip on the gun. This is due also in no small part to

the relatively low bore of the design (thank you, John Browning) that results in less muzzle rise. The truest testament to the shootability of the design is the fact that 1911s can be found everywhere more than 100 years after their introduction.

The Marine Corps Operator was accurate—undoubtedly more accurate than my shooting. With the provided magazines it was completely reliable with every type of ammo except some Black Hills jacketed hollowpoints, but they ran perfectly through the gun when I switched to Wilson Combat magazines.

I carried and competed with a single-stack 1911 in .45 ACP for 12 years, and for the last eight or so of those years, my daily carry gun was a customized Springfield Armory. That should tell you how I feel about the quality of its products. The Marine Corps Operator shows that the firm's 1911s have, if anything, gotten better over time. 



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LOOKING FOR TROUBLE

BY RICHARD NANCE | ILLUSTRATIONS & PHOTOS BY ALFREDO RICO

THERE ARE TIMES YOU HAVE TO SEARCH FOR AN INTRUDER. HERE'S HOW TO GO ABOUT IT.



An assailant who's lying in wait will always have the advantage over the police officer, homeowner or CCW holder who's searching for him. A good crook will hide until the person searching for him comes into view, at which point he can ambush his unsuspecting prey. That's why, when it comes to home defense, arming yourself and barricading in your safe room is the preferred strategy. Unfortunately, holing up in your safe room is not always an option. Like it or not, the situation may dictate that you search for the bad guy.

When searching for a criminal—especially one who's armed—the margin of error is razor thin. If the bad guy sees you before you see him, you could be shot, stabbed or bludgeoned before you even know you're in a fight. In order to prevail in this potentially deadly game of hide and seek, you need to effectively search threat areas without exposing anymore of your body than necessary.

While searching with your gun is not overly complicated, it requires an understanding of shooting angles and a continual assessment of your position relative to a potential threat area. Although your adversary and the environment in which you are searching often dictate the appropriate tactic, adhering to these tried-and-true search concepts will help tilt the odds in your favor.

A gun held at eye level can obscure your view, making it difficult to see someone's hands to determine whether that person is holding a weapon. When holding the gun at eye level, there is also tendency to look through the sights, which significantly reduces your field of view and can result in tunnel vision: You focus so intently on an object (like a weapon or assailant) you become oblivious to other potential hazards, such as additional assailants.

As you search, you want your →

LOOKING FOR TROUBLE

← handgun at the ready yet below your line of sight. If you're searching for an assailant who you know poses a deadly threat, perhaps lowering the muzzle just enough to provide a view of a person's waist (the most common concealed carry location) and hands would be appropriate.

Alternatively, you could bring the gun to your chest, which is less fatiguing and quick to target but also leaves your gun pointed at anyone you face, whether friend or foe.

If you don't know whether the assailant you're searching for poses a deadly threat or if there are bystanders, the Low Ready position—the muzzle directed at the ground in front of you—would be more prudent. Although Low Ready is slower for getting your gun on target, it keeps you from pointing the gun at innocent people.

In either case, it's imperative your index finger remain outside of the trigger guard until you've

identified a threat and made a conscious decision to fire. With your finger on the trigger, being startled could cause you to reflexively pull the trigger.

With your handgun held in an appropriate ready position and your trigger finger indexed along the frame, you're ready to begin your search. Since it's likely you may be required to search a structure, addressing how to safely

open a door is a logical starting point. The idea was for the first officer in line to enter the room to "get wet" as soon as the door was cracked. That way, he was assured an unobstructed entry through the doorway. From there, the rest of the team could flood the room and overwhelm the bad guy.

During a SWAT team dynamic entry, this is a valid approach. But for an armed citizen acting alone, the exact opposite tactic is better. In such case, the idea is to move in

With your finger on the trigger, being startled could cause you to reflexively pull the trigger.

open a door is a logical starting point.

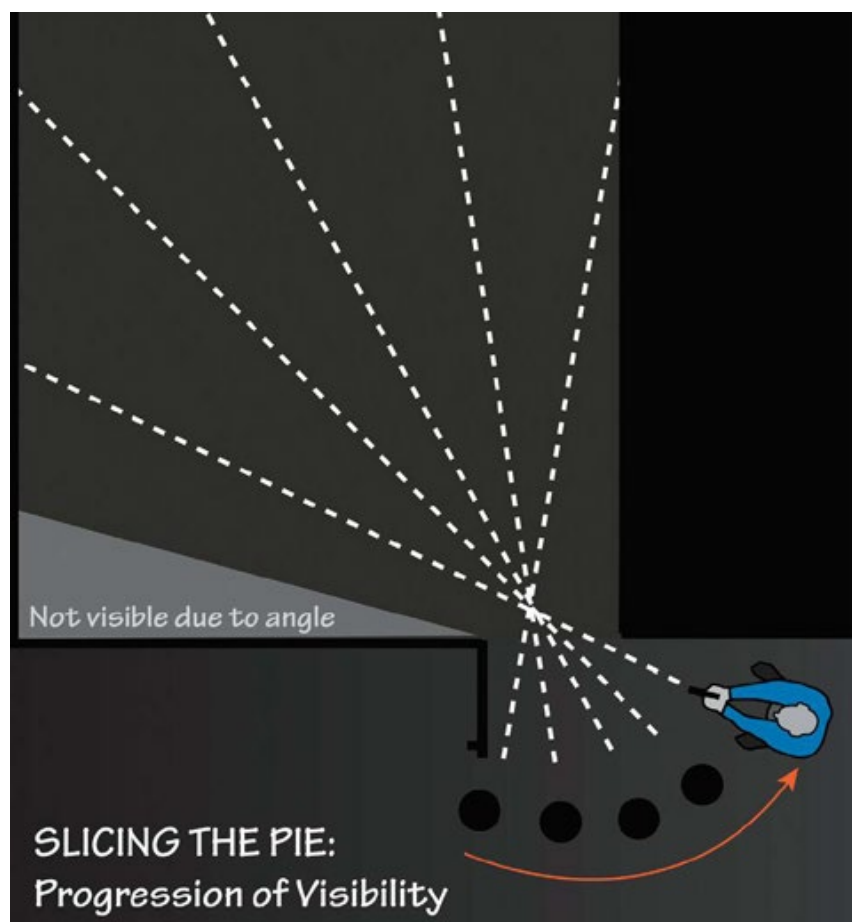
At a police tactical training course, I was given an interesting analogy regarding closed doors. The instructor said to imagine there was water from floor to ceiling on the other side of the door. The idea was for the first

a more deliberate and safe manner. The armed citizen should strive not to "get wet."

Here's how to open a door without undue risk. For doors that open away from you, being on the knob side will keep you from being seen as the door opens. Grasp the handle with your non-gun hand →



A Envision the room on the other side of a door to be filled to the ceiling with water. When you go to open that door, you don't want to "get wet."



A A time-tested technique to scoping out a room you want to clear is called "slicing the pie"—basically shifting your position a bit at a time as you try to see into the room.

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← (being careful not to reach in front of the muzzle) then give the knob a twist. If it turns, push that door open and step back, away from the threshold of the door.

Dealing with a door that opens toward you calls for positioning yourself on the hinge side initially. Then, after twisting the knob, you can stay behind the door as your pull it open. Of course, architectural design, furniture or other obstacles may prohibit you from observing this protocol when opening doors, so you need to remain mentally flexible.

Regardless of the way the door

swings, once open, don't rush in unless absolutely necessary. If your children are screaming in fear or shots are ringing out, time is clearly of the essence and bursting through the doorway may be worth the risk, but in most cases rushing through a doorway needlessly exposes yourself to whomever is on the other side.

A better plan is to obtain as much information as possible from outside the room. For that, we rely on a time-tested technique called "slicing the pie."

Slicing the pie involves moving slowly from one side of the

doorway to the other to see into the room one section or slice at a time. Clearly, this is much safer than walking through the doorway and scanning the entire room for threats without the benefit of cover or even concealment.

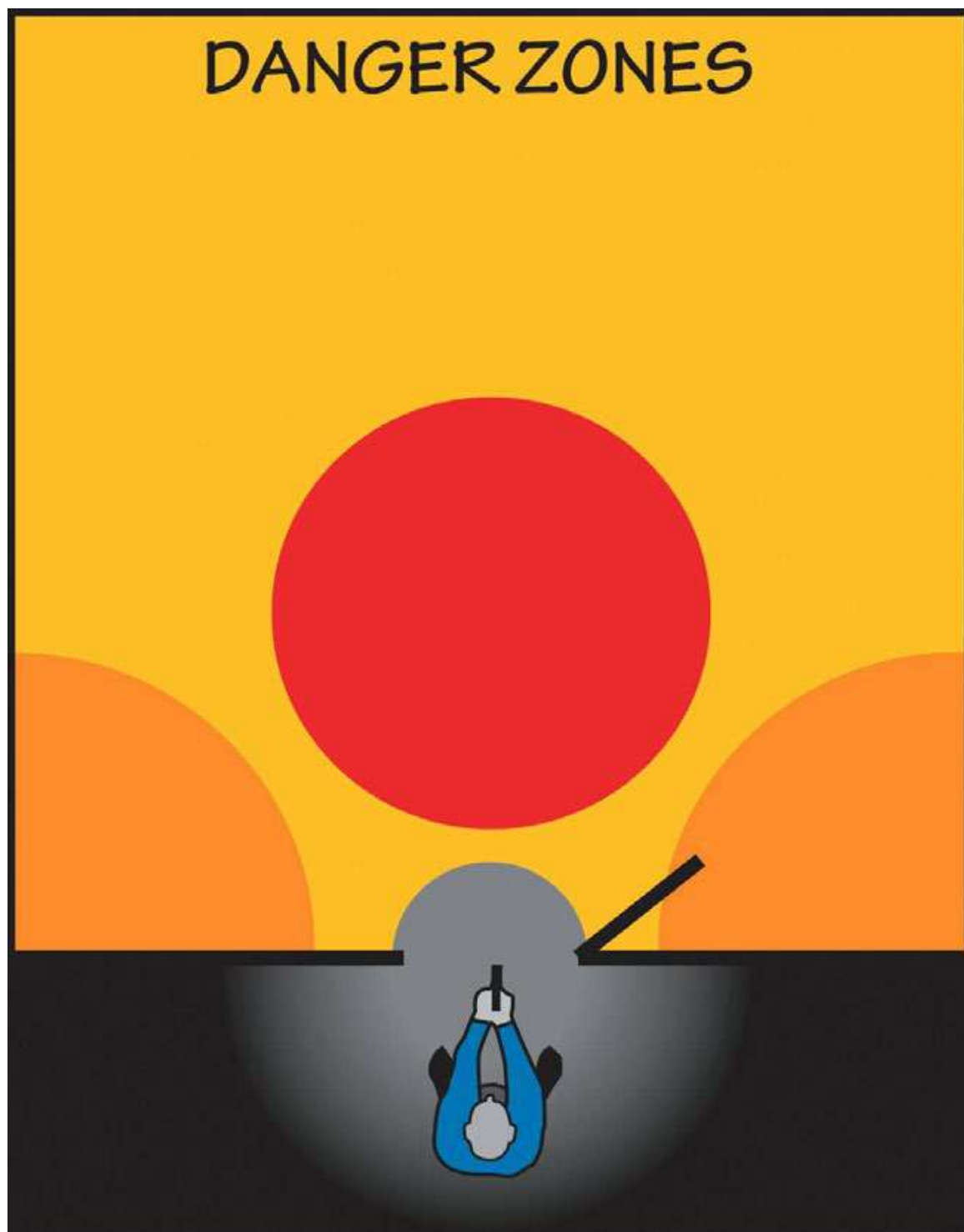
For best results, remain a few feet back from the doorway as you take small steps in a semicircular pattern. Taking too large of a step will expose your leg (and its vital femoral artery), and it will telegraph your movement.

Leaning to the side at the waist, a technique sometimes referred to as "rolling out," ensures that little more than your dominant eye, hand and shoulder are exposed. When moving to your non-gun side, rotating the gun approximately 90 degrees enables you to collapse your non-gun side elbow and shoulder, thus minimizing your exposure to the threat.

In most cases, you can visually clear the vast majority of the room before setting foot inside. Of course, you need to be cognizant of furniture and other objects that a bad guy may be hiding behind. Particularly when dealing with a corner-fed room—where the door is all the way to one side of the wall, which affords you a view down the near-side wall—you should be able to clear approximately 90 percent of the room simply by slicing the pie.

Rather than walking into the room to clear the remaining 10 percent, it's possible to enter partway without exposing yourself unnecessarily—a "limited penetration entry" in tactical jargon. Assume a kneeling position, with your back against the door jamb. Slowly roll your upper body into the doorway to visually clear the remaining portion of the room.

The advantage of kneeling is that even if the bad guy is monitoring the doorway, he'll likely be focusing at a higher point, and by being unpredictable—in this case



▲ In a center-fed room you're exposed to two hard corners simultaneously, but Nance considers the center of the room to be the primary threat area. Address that first, then clear one of the hard corners.

lower—you might be able to see him before he sees you.

After visually clearing a room, you may need to enter that room to either conduct a more thorough search or to access another area. In either case, use caution. Obviously, if the circumstance precludes you from slicing the pie prior to entry, you're at even greater risk. Either way, you must understand which areas are likely to present the greatest threat.

If you've sliced the pie and conducted a limited penetration entry, when you enter the room you can focus on searching behind furniture and other objects that may have hid a bad guy from your view initially. Without the benefit of having sliced the pie, you're essentially entering the room blind. Still, by prioritizing the room according to established threat areas, you can greatly enhance your safety.

Primary Threat Areas

As a police officer, and particularly as a SWAT team member, I was always taught the two primary threat areas of a room were the "hard corners," those located along the same plane as the doorway your entering. (When dealing with a corner-fed room, there will only be one hard corner).

With a team of well-trained officers, the first and second enter the room nearly simultaneously, each covering one of the hard corners to protect his partner's back. Subsequent officers would then enter the room and assume appropriate positions.

Having played the role of bad guy during several force-on-force room clearing exercises, I can tell you that a team of officers swarming a room is overwhelming. But when you're entering a room by yourself to search for a bad guy, you're at a considerable disadvantage.

For one thing, it's impossible for you to address two hard corners at the same time. If you cover one →

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LOOKING FOR TROUBLE

← corner, your back is exposed to the other, as well as to the rest of the room. If you move straight through the doorway of a center-fed room (where the doorway is not on a corner of the room), you will be exposed to both hard corners simultaneously.

As important as it is to clear the hard corners, I would argue that the primary threat area lies just inside the doorway. After all, you may never get to clear the hard corners if there's a criminal with a gun just inside the doorway. As you move through the doorway, after glancing ahead to ensure there's no threat directly in front of you, move to visually clear one of the hard corners, then immediately focus your attention on the rest of the room.

You Found Him. Now What?

So you find the armed criminal. The next step is to get behind cover and order him to drop his weapon. If he complies, direct him away from the weapon and order him to lie face down. If possible, hold him at gunpoint until the police arrive. But always remember he may not be alone. You must remain vigilant and mindful of your surroundings.

As a legal gun owner, it's your duty to be familiar with the laws in your jurisdiction that pertain to your right to use force in self-defense. Clearly, if an armed criminal threatens you with the weapon and is capable of using that weapon against you, shooting him would be an appropriate response.

Depending on the nature and severity of the crimes the bad guy committed, giving chase or even using deadly force to prevent him from escaping may be justified. However, unless you know the criminal has committed a violent felony and poses a deadly threat if not immediately apprehended, your only legal option may be to allow him to flee. In such case, immediately provide a detailed description, direction of travel, and weapon description to responding police officers.—RN

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As I mentioned, entering a room alone in search of the bad guy, without first obtaining as much information as possible from outside, is not advised. However if you awoke to shots being fired and family members screaming, this is, in all likelihood, the search method you will default to.

Searching Outside

While less common, there may be circumstances where you find yourself having to search outside your home or office. When conducting an exterior search, use cover and concealment whenever possible. Also, move slowly and quietly to the extent possible to avoid compromising your position. When searching around a corner, use the slicing the pie technique to minimize your exposure to the threat.

When searching outside or in a multilevel structure, don't forget to look up. The bad guy may take the high ground, be it an upstairs window, a roof or even a tree.

Whether inside or outside, it's important to remember that if you don't expect to find someone, you're not searching but rather foolishly placing yourself in harm's way. Going through the motions of a search without being focused and mentally prepared to engage with lethal force if warranted is a good way to get killed. That being said, you mustn't assume that finding an armed criminal will necessarily end in a firefight. It is the criminal's actions that ultimately decide his fate.

As a police officer, I've searched for my fair share of bad guys. It's stressful. You can bet that if you find yourself in this position, particularly when members of your own family may be in peril, you're going to be amped up. That's why it's critically important that you give some thought to conducting a safe and efficient search before you partake in a game of high stakes hide and seek. 

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GLOCK G35 GEN4 MOS

THERE'S A DEFINITE TREND TOWARD

optics-ready handguns, firearms that accommodate a variety of optics and their mounting systems without having to send the gun to a 'smith. Glocks have proven popular for action pistol shooting, and since red dot sights rule the scoreboard in many competitions, it made sense for Glock to come out with an optics-ready gun

This year the firm introduced the Modular Optical System (MOS) configuration on its G34 (9mm), G35 (.40 S&W), G40 (10mm) and G41 (.45 ACP) Gen4 pistols. At the rear of the slides of MOS pistols is a metal cover retained by two Allen screws. Removing the cover, you find the slide has been cut to allow the shooter to attach adapter plates directly on the slide itself.

Four adapter plates and the requisite screws come with the pistol, which are suitable for mounting sights from Triji-

con, Leupold, EOTech, Meopta, Doctor, C-More and Insight Technology. One of the nice things about such a setup is you can shoot Open division with the sight mounted on the gun, then take it off and shoot the irons for Production and Limited.

Glock sent a G35 Gen4 MOS pistol for evaluation. I have used a G35 to compete in USPSA matches for years, so the pistol held few surprises. But those surprises were significant.

Gen4 Glocks feature the Rough Textured Frame (RTF) for secure handling, four interchangeable backstraps, a dual recoil spring assembly and an enlarged and reversible magazine catch. The slide and barrel shelf have been resized, and the front portion of the polymer frame has been widened and enlarged internally to accommodate the dual recoil spring assembly. The trigger mechanism housing has also been modified to fit into

GLOCK G35 GEN4 MOS

TYPE: striker-fired semiauto

CALIBER: .40 S&W

CAPACITY: 15

BARREL: 5.3 in.

OAL/HEIGHT/WIDTH (IN.): 8.75/5.4/1.2

WEIGHT: 28 oz.

CONSTRUCTION: steel slide, polymer frame

GRIPS: RTF polymer w/interchangeable backstraps (medium and large, standard and beavertail supplied)

SIGHTS: white-dot front, white-outline rear; optics-mounting cut in slide with screw-on cover

SAFETY: trigger block, firing pin and drop

TRIGGER: Safe Action; 4.6 lb. pull

PRICE: \$840

MANUFACTURER: Glock, US.GLOCK.COM

the smaller grip space.

The G35 Gen4 MOS comes with four interchangeable medium and

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← large backstraps, two of which have beavertail extensions. I have long felt this was exactly what Glock pistols needed to improve handling and recoil control, and I installed the medium beavertail backstrap right off. It positioned the pistol in my hand so that when I lifted it the sights were aligned on what I was looking at. Glocks with the standard tang tend to point low for me.

The enlarged magazine release on the MOS is a welcome addition, especially for shooters with shorter fingers. The release can be installed on either side of the pistol. The G35 MOS comes with three 15-round magazines.

Before heading to the range, I mounted a Leupold Delta Point optical sight on the Glock. It was straightforward and easy, even for someone as fumble-fingered as yours truly. The Delta Point is compact and light and has a wide field of view, and it proved practical, rugged and reliable throughout my testing. However, the Glock's sights are too low to co-

witness through this particular sight (and perhaps any red dot sight), so if you want to co-witness, you'll have to replace the stock sights with aftermarket models.

The trigger on this pistol had a rather gritty stroke, and while it broke within factory specs, according to my RCBS trigger pull scale, it required a bit of nursing. Once I had the hang of it, I was able to produce well-centered groups ranging from slightly under two to three inches in size with five different loads.

The G35 MOS performed best with Cor-Bon's Performance Match ammunition, but this load does not make Major Power Factor, and I would be at a disadvantage using it in USPSA competition. (Power Factor is figured by multiplying the bullet's weight by its velocity and dividing by 1,000. USPSA's Major is 165, Minor is 124.)

I also ran G35 MOS through a classic USPSA drill: El Presidente. This stage of my test-firing further reinforced my positive opinion of the Gen4 modifications, especially the beavertail backstrap and enlarged magazine release.

It took me a while to get used to using the dot sight, but after a bit of practice, I

was making multiple double taps on the three targets and keeping the majority of them all in the A zones.

I found the G35 Gen4 MOS to be simple to use, easy shooting, suitably accurate and utterly reliable over 350 rounds fired during the testing.

However, as I mentioned, the trigger wasn't great on this particular pistol. It's far too heavy and the reset too gritty for serious competition shooting. And I do have one suggestion. The MOS would be much more practical for Open division competition if there were a ported-barrel option.

But if you're looking for a pistol that will let you test the waters in Open division competition—without the expense of building a custom race pistol—the new Glock 35 Gen4 MOS will fill the bill rather nicely.



As a Gen4, the pistol has the RTF texture on the grips and also features interchangeable backstraps. As an MOS, the backstraps are offered in standard or beavertail configurations.

ACCURACY RESULTS GLOCK G35 GEN4 MOS				
.40 S&W	Bullet Weight (gr.)	Muzzle Velocity (fps)	Standard Deviation	Avg. Group (in.)
Speer Gold Dot	155	1,168	34	3.0
Cor-Bon Performance Match	160	820	22	2.3
Remington Golden Saber	165	1,079	26	2.5
Black Hills FMJ	180	951	29	2.6
Berry's Plated*	180	937	29	2.7

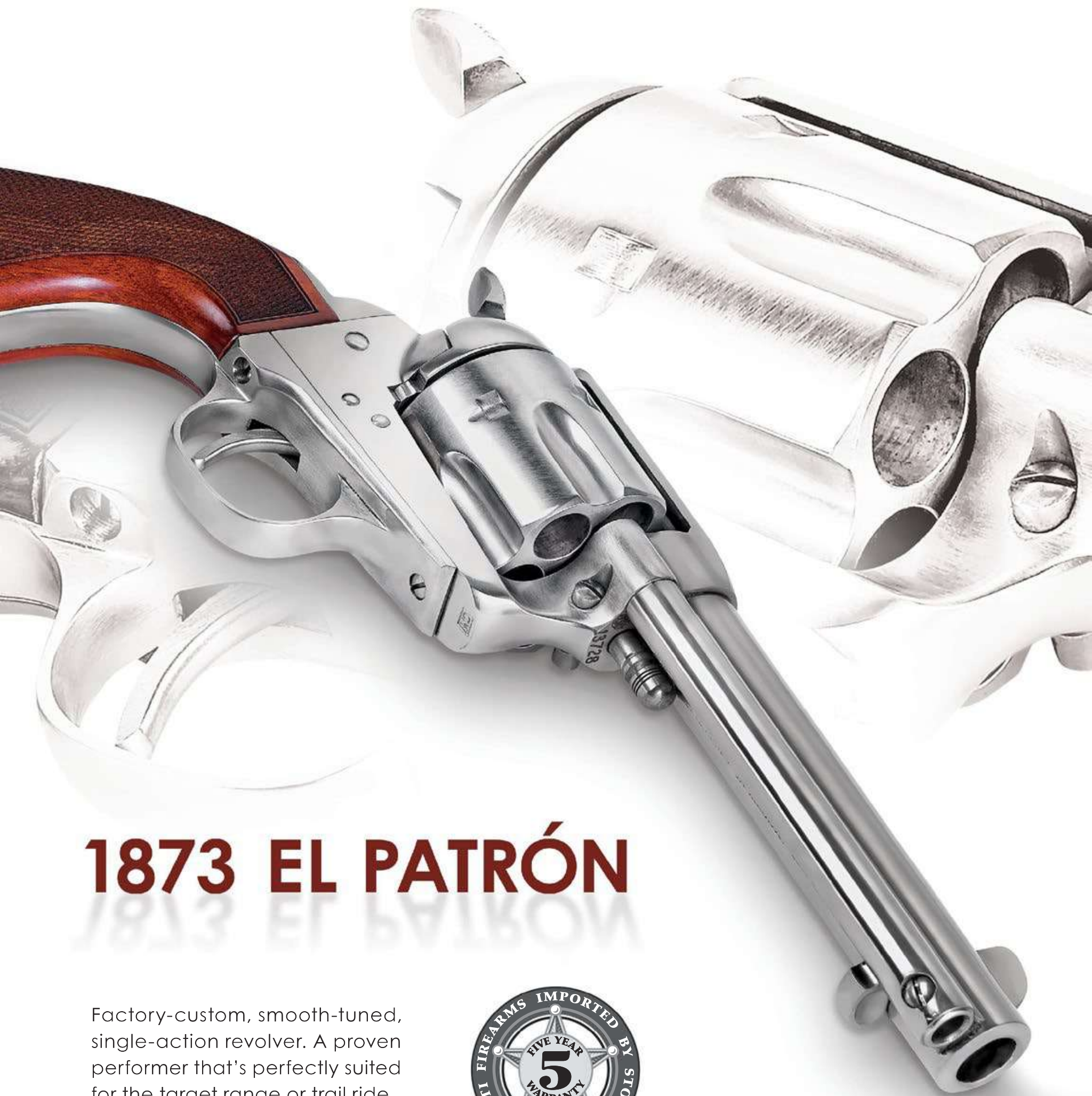
Notes: (*Handload) Accuracy results are the averages of five five-shot groups fired at 25 yards from an MTM K-Zone rest. Velocities are the averages of 10 shots measured with a Chrony chronograph 10 feet from the muzzle. Abbreviation: FMJ, full metal jacket



A plate attached with Allen screws covers the optics mounting cut at the rear of the G35 MOS slide. The gun also features an extended mag release that can be swapped to either side.



Installation of a red dot sight—in this case, Leupold's Delta Point—is simple and straightforward. However, at least with the Leupold, the Glock's factory sights weren't high enough to co-witness with the Delta's aiming point.



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DESERT EAGLE 1911 U

HARDLY A DAY GOES BY WHERE WE DO

not see the introduction of at least one “new” 1911 variant. That’s because, as the makers tell me, whatever they build they sell. Magnum Research has just upped the ante on its Desert Eagle line of 1911s with the U model, the “U” denoting Undercover due to its curt three-inch barrel. It’s also a lightweight, checking in at just under 26 ounces, thanks in part to its aluminum frame.

The Undercover is traditional single action, manufactured for Magnum Research in Israel and chambered for the .45 ACP. It has all the features you could want for a gun that lists right at a grand. The rear sight assembly is target quality, complete with adjustments for both windage and elevation. While not

everyone would want adjustable sights on a concealed-carry gun, the rear has a serrated face and well-cut notch that matches well with the pinned-in and serrated front blade for an outstanding sight picture.

The steel slide has an enlarged and flared ejection port along with rear cocking serrations. Inside are a stainless steel full-length guide rod and a bushingless three-inch barrel that’s precision fit.

The Undercover’s skeletonized aluminum trigger is adjustable for overtravel and breaks at 3.5 pounds with just a hint of slack before the sear breaks clean. A trigger pull at this weight is getting to be the norm these days as manufacturing

DESERT EAGLE 1911 U

TYPE: 1911

CALIBER: .45 ACP

CAPACITY: 6+1

BARREL: 3 in.

OAL/HEIGHT/WIDTH: 6.9/5.0/1.4 in.

WEIGHT: 26 oz.

CONSTRUCTION: blued (tested) or natural aluminum frame; blued (tested) or stainless steel slide

GRIPS: checkered walnut

SIGHTS: adjustable rear, post front

SAFETY: thumb, beavertail grip with memory bump

TRIGGER: 3.5 lb. pull (measured), adjustable for overtravel

PRICE: \$946 (as tested)

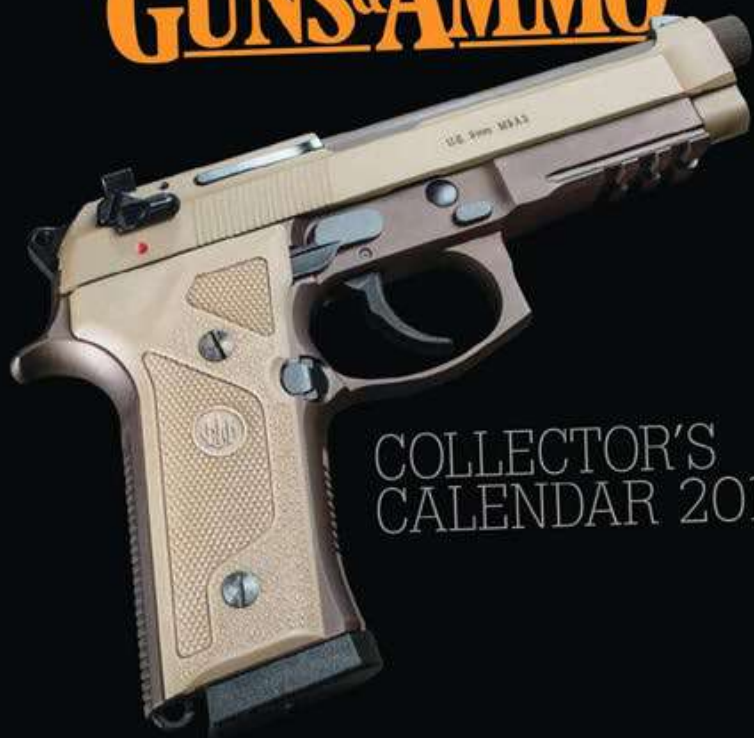
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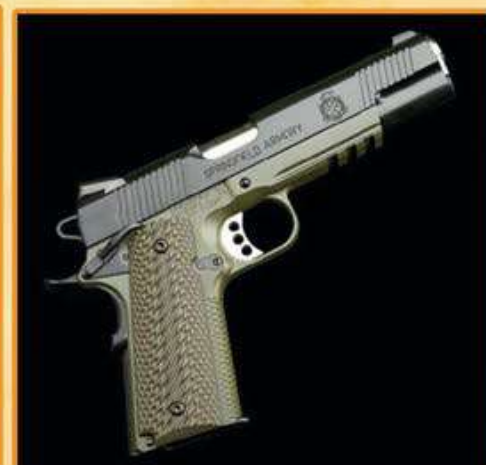


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← tolerances get tighter and tighter; in years past, lowering the trigger pull on a semiautomatic required time (and talent) with a file to get everything to mesh right and even.

Operator controls include a nicely extended thumb safety that in conjunction with the beavertail safety—complete with memory bump—makes the gun a pleasure to shoot. The slide catch is not only extended outward but also is nicely checkered for non-slip use even when wearing gloves. The magazine release is checkered, as are the front and back of the grip frame. The pattern is semi-aggressive and is kind to your shooting hand.

While the gun has the dimensions of a cut-down Government model, the grip frame is still comfortable, with a moderate length and a small undercut at the rear of the trigger guard. The trigger guard is rounded on the front edge and finely finished with extra room for larger hands.

Two magazines come with the gun, and if the gun were mine, I'd add base pads for a little extra length for easier seating in the gun. The stocks are a handsome set of diamond-checkered grip panels decorated with nickel-plated stock screws and relieved at the bottom to make it easier to manipulate magazines. Overall, the gun shows a fine fit and finish seen on guns costing more.

The 1911 U doesn't disassemble in the conventional manner. After removing the magazine and ensuring the gun is unloaded, lock back the slide. Locate the small hole in the shaft of the recoil spring guide and insert the supplied

tool. This will capture the spring guide plunger. Allow the slide to return to its fully closed position, remove the slide stop and push the slide forward and off the frame. Finally, turn the slide upside down and lift the recoil spring up and out of the slide. (For a more thorough description, consult the owner's manual.)

The gun surprised me at the range. Small, lightweight .45s are usually hard on the hand, but although this gun did not win any prizes for extreme comfort, it was pleasant enough to shoot—something I attribute to the innovative dual spring recoil assembly. The only truly punishing ammo I fired was the Remington Golden Saber—due to its +P rating and higher velocity. Over a rest, groups were 3.5 inches or smaller at 15 yards (closer yardage due to its short barrel), which I rate good to excellent for this type of service automatic.

The gun performed like a pro and chucked spent brass over my right shoulder to a distance of 15 feet and farther. There was only one malfunction, with the Winchester ammunition, but that was after all the testing was done and I was shooting some rapid-fire sequences at random targets downrange. Looking back, I don't think I can blame the gun for this because I hadn't cleaned it all day and, with all the rounds I'd fired, my technique could've been getting sloppy.

I like this gun, and with the right holster, it would conceal nicely while offering all the power provided by the .45 ACP. I know I'd certainly consider it for any number of self-defense uses. 🎯



A The pistol sports an extended slide release and, perhaps unusual for a concealed-carry gun, an adjustable rear sight. The hammer is skeletonized, and the three-hole trigger had a nice 3.5-pound pull.



A The bushing-less barrel has an 11-degree crown and is nicely fitted to the slide. The full-length recoil guide has a small hole into which a supplied tool is inserted for disassembling the gun.



A The grip safety features a memory bump to ensure activation, and the checkering on the mainspring housing and frontstrap is "semi-aggressive," providing good control without chewing up your hand.

ACCURACY RESULTS DESERT EAGLE 1911 U				
.45 ACP	Bullet Weight (gr.)	Muzzle Velocity (fps)	Standard Deviation	Avg. Group (in.)
Remington Golden Saber JHP	185	979	6	3.50
Hornady FMJ	230	736	12	2.75
Winchester PDX1	230	857	25	3.25

Notes: Accuracy results are averages of five-shot groups at 15 yards from a sandbag rest. Velocities are averages of five shots recorded on an Oehler Model 35P chronograph. Abbreviations: FMJ, full metal jacket; JHP, jacketed hollowpoint

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RUGER GP100 MATCH CHAMPION

RUGER INTRODUCED THE GP100 REVOLVER in 1985. The design featured a more robust frame and cylinder than Ruger's earlier Security-Six and Speed-Six revolvers to make it capable of standing up to the .357 Magnum. It's been available in various configurations over the years, and the newest addition is the Match Champion. As the name implies, Ruger envisioned this as a gun for shooters who compete in action shooting disciplines. The modifications are not radical, but they definitely make the revolver better suited to that purpose.

First, for those not familiar with the GP100, here's a look at the design. The GP100 has a three-point lockup: A center pin on the end of the ejector rod enters a recess in the recoil plate; a latch on the front of the cylinder crane engages a cutout in the frame under the ejector rod housing; and a heavy-duty bolt in the bottom of the frame

engages notches in the cylinder to provide extra locking.

Instead of pushing the cylinder release forward (à la S&W) or pulling it back (à la Colt), you push it in. This forces the center pin forward while pulling the cylinder crane latch back, allowing the cylinder to swing out the left.

The GP100 has a transfer bar ignition system. When the hammer is forward, it rests on the frame and does not come into contact with the frame-mounted firing pin. Cocking the hammer or completing a stroke of the trigger raises a bar in front of the firing pin that the falling hammer strikes to drive the firing pin forward. Releasing the trigger drops the bar, leaving the hammer resting on the frame once more.

Now to the Match Champion version. Each Match Champion leaves the factory with a tuned trigger mechanism for smooth, stage-free double-action

and crisp single-action trigger pulls. It is fitted with a set of Hogue stippled hardwood grips that provide excellent pointability and recoil control. →

RUGER GP100 MATCH CHAMPION

TYPE: double-action/single-action revolver

CALIBER: .357 Magnum

CAPACITY: 6

BARREL: 4.2 in., flat-milled, half lug, target crown

OAL/HEIGHT/WIDTH: 9.5/5.3/1.3 in.

WEIGHT: 38 oz.

CONSTRUCTION: stainless steel

GRIPS: Hogue stippled hardwood

SIGHTS: fixed Novak Lo-Mount Carry rear; green fiber-optic front

SAFETY: transfer bar

TRIGGER: factory tuned: SA, 4 lb.; DA, 11.5 lb. (measured)

PRICE: \$749

MANUFACTURER: Ruger, RUGER.COM

FORMER CIA OFFICIAL WARNS:

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In a recent interview, former CIA official Dr. Peter Pry, warned, *"There is an imminent threat from ISIS to the national electric grid and not just to a single U.S. city."*

Pry explained that attacks on just nine of the nation's 55,000 electrical substations could result in coast-to-coast blackouts for up to 18 months.

Frank Gaffney, founder and president of the Center for Security Policy in Washington went even further. *"... should the power go out and stay out for over a year, nine out of 10 Americans would likely perish."*

What could be a more frightening thought than that?

IT MAY HAVE ALREADY BEGUN.

On April 16 last year, snipers fired on an electrical substation in San Jose. Shooting for 19 minutes, they managed to knock out 17 giant transformers that provide power as far away as Silicon Valley. It took workers 27 days to restore the facility. No arrests were made.

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It's no secret ISIS and other radical groups hate America. Their mission is to destroy us by whatever means possible. *A successful attack on the grid would definitely bring about the end of the world as we know it.*

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HANDGUNS | FIRING LINE REPORT | RUGER GP100 MATCH

← The 4.2-inch barrel is slab-sided with a half-length lug that, while there can be no denying it looks as sexy as hell, does not really serve any other purpose. The muzzle, however, features a target crown that protects the rifling. I was disappointed that the cylinder chamber mouths were not beveled to facilitate the use of speed-loaders for speed reloading.

The front-side blade has been cut

to accept a fiber-optic rod. The rear is a Novak Lo-Mount Carry with a plain black square notch. Both are mounted in dovetails for easy windage adjustments. I must say these are some of the best fixed sights I have ever seen on a factory production revolver. (Ed. note: A new adjustable-sight version is also available.)

During accuracy testing, the revolver tended to print a bit to the right, and



▲ The Match Champion's rear sight is a fixed Novak Lo-Mount Carry; the front sports a green fiber-optic rod. Scarlata would've preferred red instead of green.



▲ Ejection was sure and complete, even with .357 cases, although Scarlata wished Ruger had beveled the cylinder mouths for faster reloading.



▲ The Hogue hand-stippled grip not only looks good but also offers good control and a comfortable shooting experience.

ACCURACY RESULTS | RUGER GP100 MATCH CHAMPION

	Bullet Weight (gr.)	Muzzle Velocity (fps)	Standard Deviation	Avg. Group (in.)
.357 MAGNUM				
Cor-Bon JHP	125	1,359	23	2.5
Winchester Silvertip	145	1,111	27	2.0
Federal NyClad	158	1,183	19	2.3
.38 SPECIAL				
Black Hills + P JHP	125	921	31	2.3
Remington LSWC	148	790	24	2.0

Notes: Accuracy results are the averages of five five-shot groups fired from an MTM K-Zone rest at 25 yards. Velocities are the averages of five rounds measured 10 feet from the muzzle with a Chrony chronograph. Abbreviations: JHP, jacketed hollowpoint; LSWC, lead semi-wadcutter

CHAMPION

had I remembered to bring my tools I would've been able to drift the rear sight to get it centered up. As can be seen from the accompanying chart, the gun showed a preference for lower-velocity loads.

I then belted on a holster and ran a series of offhand drills at seven, 10 and 15 yards—firing one- and two-handed in double- and single-action modes. Reloading was facilitated by a pair of HKS speedloaders.

I am a longtime fan of the medium-frame double-action revolver, so I took to the Ruger like the proverbial duck to water. While the double-action trigger displayed a bit of new-gun stiffness, I could feel it smoothing out about halfway through the drills.

The Ruger's weight and hand-filling grips provided above-average recoil control, although I must admit that I would not have enjoyed firing too many more magnums. I could have shot .38s through it until the sun went down with nary a second thought.

The ejector rod punched spent cases, even the long .357s, out of the cylinder quickly and completely. But as I noted earlier, because the chamber mouths were not beveled, some of my speed reloads were, well, less than speedy.

The Match Champion's sights proved as good as I had expected, allowing fast alignment, target acquisition and recovery. But I found the green fiber optic less than optimal and would much prefer red.

Of the 36 rounds I fired during the drills, only two were outside the nine and 10 rings, which isn't bad for the first time out with an untried handgun.

My only other suggestion is now that USPSA has approved seven- and eight-shot revolvers, I think Ruger would be wise to add an extra chamber. I think there's plenty of metal there to work with, and it would not require a great deal of modification to the lockwork. Just my two cents.

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GOOD, BETTER, BEST?

TACKLING THE ALWAYS TRICKY QUESTION OF WHAT'S THE "RIGHT" TECHNIQUE.

MY GOOD FRIEND AND LONGTIME POLICE

K-9 trainer, Jim Faggiano, once told me the only thing two K-9 trainers can agree on is how screwed up the third trainer is. Over the years, I've noticed a similar sentiment among firearms instructors.

While it's expected each instructor would believe his method to be best—after all, why would an instructor teach anything he or she thought was inferior to something else?—a firearms instructor with a “My way or the highway attitude” should be avoided.

First off, if there was a “best” way to shoot, everyone would be teaching the same thing. Since that's clearly not the case, we have to acknowledge that more than one style of shooting has merit.

Are some shooting methods more conducive to self-defense than others? Absolutely. But the bad guy probably won't even notice whether you shoot him from an isosceles or a Weaver stance. If your shooting platform provides a good balance of mobility and stability, the minutia of foot placement, arm extension and so forth is irrelevant.

In recent years, there seems to be a trend in the tactical training arena for up-and-coming instructors to bash more well-established shooting techniques. While these instructors may have something to offer, in many cases their primary goal seems to be to make a name for themselves. Not surprisingly, much of what is sold as “new and improved” is simply a repackaging of tried-and-tested techniques, with a slight tweak here and there.

Thanks to its popularity, Gunsite and Col. Jeff Cooper's Modern Technique of the Pistol seems to be the

target of many instructors claiming to have, in essence, reinvented the wheel. And for every Gunsite hater there's a Gunsite devotee so enamored with Cooper and his teachings they refuse to even consider another approach to shooting is worthwhile.

I never had the pleasure of meeting Cooper, but I have read much of what he wrote, watched some of his videos and spoken at length to several of his students. As a police officer, much of what I was taught about shooting,

As a police officer, much of what I was taught about shooting, from grip to mindset, can be traced...to Cooper.

from grip to mindset, can be traced directly back to Cooper.

When it comes to mindset, I find his teachings to be second to none, but with regard to shooting technique, I prefer a more squared-up stance than the bladed Weaver stance advocated by Cooper. The Weaver stance is not flawed; it's just not my favorite shooting stance. I decide for myself which elements of Cooper's—or any instructor's—curriculum get added to my individual shooting style.

The reason the Modern Technique is still around is because it's valid. However, to dismiss a technique, tactic or an entire shooting system because “That's not how Cooper did it” is as detrimental as those who would disregard it because it is not the latest and greatest approach. I don't believe Cooper sought blind devotion to method any more than Bruce Lee did from students of his brand of martial art.

Out of misguided devotion, some

students become so entrenched in the intricacies of their respective systems that they stagnate. What's often overlooked is that Cooper and Lee weren't traditionalists like their fan boys. These men were radicals, and their contributions to the self-defense world were revolutionary. I doubt either of these innovators would lead their students to believe their way was the only way.

As a firearms instructor, I am constantly trying to learn better ways

of doing things because I want my students to have the best chance of surviving an attack. My goal is not merely to regurgitate what I was taught but to improve upon it. This typically involves combining elements from several different shooting or fighting methods with my own experience. If a technique or tactic works, it's good, regardless of its origin.

There are only so many ways to shoot a gun accurately. Do your homework and find a shooting methodology that makes sense to you. Rather than focus on “advanced” techniques, look for a simple approach.

When it comes to self-defense, there is no “best.” What works for one person might not work for another based on differences in age, physicality, skill level and other factors. Keep an open mind and don't accept what any instructor says as gospel. It's up to you to find your own path to enlightenment.



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A Kimber Onyx Ultra II pistol with a silver and black finish, shown in a side profile view. The slide is engraved with "ONYX ULTRA II" and "YONKERS NY USA". The frame is engraved with "KIMBER MFG" and "KSU0995".

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